三国志 33

蜀への隘路

横山光輝

希望コミックス101

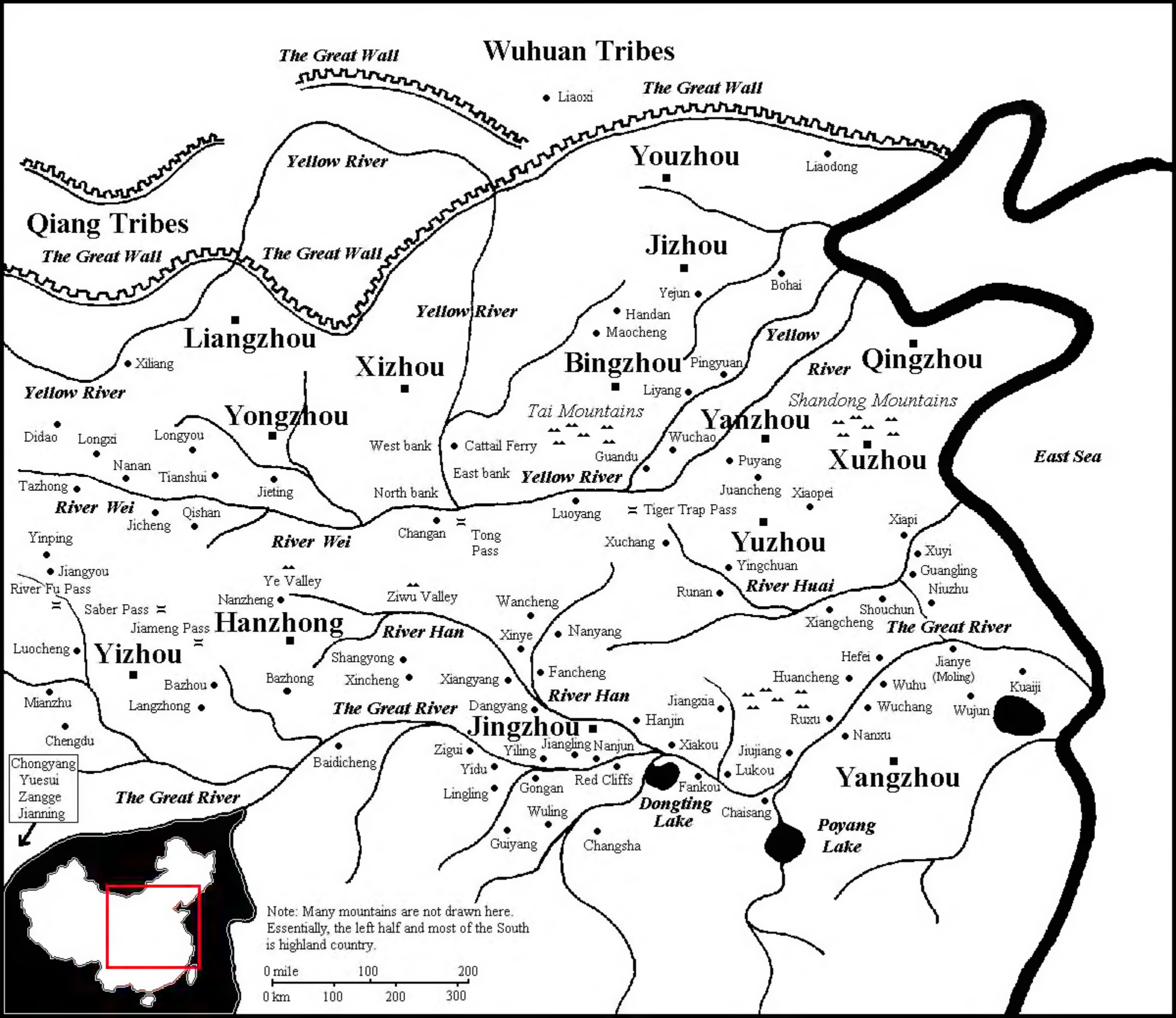
SANGOKUSHI

33

TREACHEROUS PATH TO SHU

ZHAO YUN ZILONG

YOKOYAMA MITSUTERU


Wuhuan Tribes
The Great Wall
The Great Wall
Liaoxi
Youzhou
Liaodong
Yellow River
Qiang Tribes
The Great Wall
The Great Wall
Jizhou
Bohai
Yejun
Handan
Maocheng
Yellow River
Liangzhou
Xizhou
Bingzhou
Pingyuan
Yellow River
Qingzhou
Xiliang
Yellow River
Liyang
Shandong Mountains
Tai Mountains
Yongzhou
Yanzhou
Didao
Longxi
Longyou
West bank
Cattail Ferry
Wuchao
Guandu
Xuzhou
East Sea
Nanan
East bank
Yellow River
Puyang
Tianshui
Tazhong
Jieting
North bank
Juancheng
Xiaopei
River Wei
Qishan
Luoyang
Tiger Trap Pass
Jicheng
Changan
Tong Pass
Xiapi
Yuzhou
Yinping
River Wei
Xuchang
Xuyi
Jiangyou
Ye Valley
Yingchuan
Guangling
River Fu Pass
Ziwu Valley
Runan
River Huai
Niuzhu
Saber Pass
Nanzheng
Wancheng
Shouchun
Jiameng Pass
Hanzhong
River Han
Xinye
Nanyang
Xiangcheng
The Great River
Luocheng
Yizhou
Shangyong
Hefei
Jianye (Moling)
Fancheng
Huancheng
Bazhou
Bazhong
Xincheng
Xiangyang
Wuhu
Kuaiji
River Han
Jiangxia
Mianzhu
Langzhong
The Great River
Dangyang
Wuchang
Wujun
Ruxu
Hanjin
Jingzhou
Chengdu
Nanxu
Zigui
Yiling
Jiangling
Nanjun
Xiakou
Jiujiang
Baidicheng
Yidu
Lukou
Yangzhou
Chongyang
Yuesui
Zangge
Jianning
Red Cliffs
Fankou
Gongan
Lingling
Dongting Lake
Chaisang
Wuling
Poyang Lake
Guiyang
Changsha
The Great River
Note: Many mountains are not drawn here.
Essentially, the left half and most of the South
is highland country.
0 mile 100 200
0 km 100 200 300

SANGOKUSHI'S CAST OF CHARACTERS

PART 1: CHARACTERS TO KEEP IN MIND

CAO CAO MENGDE:
THE AMBITIOUS AND MACHIAVELLIAN HERO OF SANGOKUSHI. HAVING BECOME THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN, HE HAS RELEGATED EMPEROR XIAN AS A MERE PUPPET RULER.

CHEN DENG:
THE SON OF CHEN GUI AND FORMERLY TAO QIAN OF XUZHOU'S SUBORDINATE. HE AND HIS FATHER SUCCESSFULLY PLOTTED LU BU'S DOWNFALL.

CHEN GUI:
FATHER OF CHEN DENG WHO SUCCESSFULLY PLOTTED LU BU'S DOWNFALL. DESPITE SECRETLY WORKING TOGETHER WITH LIU BEI AGAINST CAO CAO, CAO CAO SPARES HIS LIFE AND ALLOWS HIM TO CONTINUE LIVING IN XUZHOU.

CHENG GONG:
A CITY GUARD CAPTAIN WHO ARRESTED CAO CAO, ONLY TO FREE AND ESCAPE WITH HIM AFTER SYMPATHIZING WITH HIS STORY. HOWEVER, HE LATER DEFECTS TO LU BU AND SERVES AS HIS ADVISOR. IN VOLUME 14, HE IS EXECUTED ALONG WITH LU BU.

EMPRESS HE:
ORIGINALY A PEASANT, HER BEAUTY WAS NOTICED BY THE TEN ATTENDANTS WHO THEN PRESENTED HER TO EMPEROR LING. SHE SOON BECAME EMPEROR LING'S FAVOURITE CONSORT AND GAVE BIRTH TO PRINCE LIU BIAN. HOWEVER, SHE AND HER SON WERE REMOVED FROM POWER AND KILLED BY DONG ZHUO WHEN HE CAME TO POWER.

DIAN WEI:
CAO CAO'S PERSONAL BODYGUARD, RENOWNED FOR HIS STRENGTH. HE IS ALSO KNOWN BY THE NICKNAME, "E LAI," IN REFERENCE TO THE MIGHTY GENERAL OF THE SAME NAME WHO SERVED UNDER KING ZHOU OF SHANG. IN VOLUME 12, HE WAS KILLED DURING ZHANG XIU'S PLOT TO KILL CAO CAO.

DIAO CHAN:
A SLAVE GIRL OF WANG YUN, WHO RAISED HER AS HIS OWN DAUGHTER. SHE AND WANG YUN PLOTTED TO DISTANCE LU BU FROM DONG ZHUO BY HAVING HER SEDUCE BOTH MEN. IN VOLUME 8, SHE COMMITTED SUICIDE AFTER ACCOMPLISHING HER GOAL.

DONG CHENG:
ELDER STATESMAN OF HAN WHO IS EMPEROR XIAN'S CONFIDANT. EMPEROR XIAN SECRETELY ASKS HIM TO ELIMINATE CAO CAO, WHO NOW RULES THE IMPERIAL COURT AS CHANCELLOR. IN VOLUME 17, HE IS EXECUTED AFTER HIS ASSASSINATION PLOT IS FOUND OUT BY CAO CAO.

DONG ZHUO:
GOVERNOR OF LIANGZHOU WHO LATER SEIZED CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND SEATED HIMSELF AS THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN, BECOMING AN INFAMOUS TYRANT. IN VOLUME 8, HE IS BETRAYED AND KILLED BY HIS RIGHT-HAND MAN, LU BU.

GAN NING:
FORMER-PIRATE WHO IS NOW A FIRECE GENERAL OF WU.

GONGSUN ZAN:
GOVERNOR OF BEIPING AND FRIEND TO LIU BEI. HE WAGES WAR AGAINST YUAN SHAO AFTER THE LATTER TRICKS HIM AND KILLS HIS YOUNG BROTHER. IN VOLUME 15, YUAN SHAO'S ARMY CONQUERS BEIPING, CAUSING GONGSUN ZAN TO COMMIT SUICIDE.

GUAN YU YUNCHANG:
SWORN YOUNGER BROTHER TO LIU BEI AND SWORN OLDER BROTHER TO ZHANG FEI. HE IS AS FIERCE AS GUAN YU BUT IS MORE RESTRAINED AND CALM IN HIS MANNERISMS.

GUAN PING:
GUAN YU'S ADOPTED SON WHO FIRST APPEARS IN VOLUME 19.

GUO JIA:
THE TALENTED STRATEGIST AND ADVISOR TO CAO CAO. HE DIES FROM ILLNESS DURING CAO CAO'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE YUAN FAMILY (UNSHOWN IN MANGA).

HUANG ZHONG:
AN ELDERLY WARRIOR GENERAL RENOWNED ESPECIALLY FOR HIS SKILL WITH THE BOW. FORMERLY SERVED LIU BIAO AND HAN XUAN BUT SINCE THE END OF V28, HE NOW SERVES LIU BEI.

JIA XU:
THE SHREWD STRATEGIST AND ADVISOR TO ZHANG XIU. HE AND ZHANG XIU PLOTS A FAILED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON CAO CAO, BUT SUCCEEDS IN KILLING DIAN WEI. IN VOLUME 16, HE AND ZHANG XIU DEFECT TO CAO CAO'S SIDE.

LI RU:
CUNNING ADVISOR TO DONG ZHUO. WITH HIS ADVICE, DONG ZHUO FIRMLY SECURES HIS SEAT AS THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN. IN VOLUME 8, HE IS KILLED ALONG WITH DONG ZHUO WHEN LU BU REBELS.

LIU BEI XUANDE:
THE CENTRAL CHARACTER OF SANGOKUSHI. A KIND AND VIRTUOUS MAN, SAID TO BE THE DESCENDANT OF EMPEROR JING OF HAN. HE HAS SWORN AN OATH OF BROTHERHOOD WITH GUAN YU AND ZHANG FEI.

LIU BIAO:
THE GOVERNOR OF JINGZHOU. HE PASSES AWAY DUE TO SICKNESS IN VOLUME 22.

LIU XIE (EMPEROR XIAN OF HAN):
FORMERLY KNOWN AS PRINCE OF CHENLIU, HE IS THE CURRENT EMPEROR OF HAN, THOUGH CAO CAO HAS SEIZED ALL REAL POWER AWAY FROM HIM.

LU BU:
HE IS SAID TO BE THE STRONGEST WARRIOR WITH THE FASTEST HORSE, THE RED HARE. IN VOLUME 14, HE WAS BETRAYED BY HIS SUBORDINATES, AND EXECUTED BY CAO CAO.

LU SU:
MILITARY GENERAL AND ADVISOR OF WU.

MA TENG:
GOVERNOR OF XILIANG AND FATHER OF MA CHAO. UNLIKE THE ACTUAL HISTORICAL FIGURE, HE IS DEPICTED AS A HAN LOYALIST WHO SIGNS DONG CHENG'S BLOOD SEAL PLEDGE.

PANG TONG SHIYUAN:
NICKNAMED THE YOUNG PHOENIX (FENGCHU), HE IS A MASTERFUL STRATEGIST WHO STUDIED UNDER SHUI JING, ALONG WITH ZHUGE LIANG AND XU SHU. HE CURRENTLY SERVES NO LORD BUT ASSISTS WU IN THE BATTLE OF RED CLIFFS.

SHUI JING:
HIS REAL NAME IS SIMA HUI BUT HE IS MORE COMMONLY KNOWN BY HIS TAOIST NAME, SHUI JING (MEANING WATER MIRROR). HE IS THE TEACHER OF ZHUGE LIANG, PANG TONG, AND XU SHU.

SUN CE:
ELDEST SON OF SUN JIAN. IN VOLUME 19, ASSASSINS MAKE A FAILED ATTEMPT AT HIS LIFE. HIS MENTAL HEALTH SOON DETERIORATES DUE TO THE INCIDENT WITH YU JI AND HE SUCCUMBS TO DEATH.

SUN JIAN:
BORN IN WU COMMANDERY, HE WAS THE GOVERNOR OF CHANGSHA. HE PARTICIPATES IN THE ALLIANCE TO BRING DOWN DONG ZHUO. BUT IS FINDING OF THE IMPERIAL SEAL CAUSES LIU BIAO AND YUAN SHAO TO TURN ON HIM. IN VOLUME 7, HE TRIES TO EXACT HIS REVENGE ON LIU BIAO, ONLY TO BE KILLED IN BATTLE.

SUN QUAN:
YOUNGER BROTHER OF SUN CE AND THE CURRENT RULER OF WU, A REGION IN SOUTHERN CHINA.

TAISHI CI:
GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED LIU YAO BUT DEFECTED TO SUN CE IN VOLUME 11. DURING THE BATTLE OF HEFEI (VOL. 29), HE FALLS PREY TO ZHANG LIAO'S PLAN AND IS KILLED IN BATTLE.

TAO QIAN:
THE KIND GOVERNOR OF XUZHOU WHO ACCIDENTALLY INVOKES CAO CAO'S WRATH WHEN HIS DISLOYAL SUBORDINATE ZHANG KAI KILLS CAO CAO'S FATHER, CAO SONG.

THE TEN ATTENDANTS:
A CORRUPT GROUP OF 10 EUNUCHS WHO WERE THE HIGHEST RANKING MINISTERS OF THE IMPERIAL COURT. THEY SUCCEEDED IN ASSASSINATING GENERAL HE JIN BUT WERE LATER KILLED BY HE JIN'S ARMY LED BY YUAN SHAO.

WANG YUN:
THE MINISTER OF THE MASSES, ONE OF THE 3 HIGHEST RANKING POSTS IN THE IMPERIAL COURT. HE SUCCESSFULLY PLOTS DONG ZHUO'S DOWNFALL USING DIAO CHANG IN VOLUME 8. HOWEVER, HE IS LATER KILLED BY REMNANTS OF DONG ZHUO'S ARMY (UNSHOWN IN MANGA).

WEI YAN:
GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED LIU BIAO AND HAN XUAN ALONG WITH HUANG ZHONG BUT SINCE THE END OF V28, HE NOW SERVES LIU BEI.

WEN CHOU:
HE AND YANG LIANG ARE YUAN SHAO'S TWO STRONGEST GENERALS. IN VOLUME 18, HE IS AMBUSHED BY CAO CAO'S ARMY AND KILLED BY GUAN YU.

XIAHOU DUN:
TRUSTED GENERAL OF CAO CAO. HE LOST HIS LEFT EYE DURING A BATTLE AGAINST LU BU'S ARMY IN VOLUME 13.

XU CHU:
TRUSTED GENERAL OF CAO CAO. ORIGINALY A PEASANT, HE WAS RECRUITED BY CAO CAO WHO WAS IMPRESSED AFTER SEEING XU CHU'S DUEL WITH DIAN WEI.

XU SHU (SHAN FU):
THE TALENTED STRATEGIST WHO STUDIED UNDER SHUI JING. AFTER A BRIEF STINT OF SERVING LIU BEI, HE IS TRICKED INTO COMING TO XUCHANG AND SERVING CAO CAO (VOLUME 21).

XUN YU:
ONE OF CAO CAO'S MOST TALENTED ADVISORS.

YAN LIANG:
HE AND WEN CHOU ARE YUAN SHAO'S TWO STRONGEST GENERALS. IN VOLUME 17, HE WAS KILLED BY GUAN YU WHILE FIGHTING CAO CAO'S ARMY AT BAIMA.

YI JI:
AN ADVISOR TO LIU BIAO WHO WARNS LIU BEI ABOUT CAI MAO'S PLOT TO ASSASSINATE LIU BEI IN VOLUME 20.

YUAN SHAO:
OLDER BROTHER OF YUAN SHU AND THE GOVERNOR OF JIZHOU. AFTER MANY YEARS OF WARRING AGAINST CAO CAO FOR CONTROL OF NORTHERN CHINA, HE AND HIS FAMILY IS DEFEATED AND KILLED.

YUAN SHU:
YOUNGER BROTHER OF YUAN SHAO AND THE GOVERNOR OF NANYANG. AFTER RECEIVING THE IMPERIAL SEAL FROM SUN CE, HE DECLARES HIMSELF AS THE EMPEROR OF ZHONG DYNASTY. IN VOLUME 15, HE DIES OF THIRST AFTER BEING ON THE RUN FROM LIU BEI AND CAO CAO'S ARMIES.

ZHANG FEI YIDE:
A FIRECE, SHORT-TEMPERED WARRIOR WHO IS THE SWORN YOUNGER BROTHER OF LIU BEI AND GUAN YU.

ZHANG LIAO:
ONE OF CAO CAO'S TOP GENERALS. HE WAS FORMERLY LU BU'S SUBORDINATE BUT DEFECTED TO CAO CAO AFTER THE FORMER'S EXECUTION.

ZHANG XIU:
LORD OF WANCHENG WHO ATTEMPTED TO KILL CAO CAO DURING THE BATTLE OF WANCHENG IN VOLUME 12. AFTER YEARS OF CONFLICT AGAINST CAO CAO, HE FINALLY DECIDES TO DEFECT TO CAO CAO IN VOLUME 16.

ZHAO YUN ZILONG:
A FORMER RETAINER TO YUAN SHAO WHO LATER DEFECTED TO SERVE GONGSUN ZAN. AFTER GONGSUN ZAN'S DEATH, HE LATER MEETS UP WITH LIU BEI AND FINALLY BECOMES HIS RETAINER.

ZHOU CANG:
FORMERLY A YELLOW TURBAN, HE MEETS GUAN YU IN VOLUME 18 AND BECOMES HIS SUBORDINATE.

ZHOU YU GONGJIN:
SWORN BROTHER OF SUN CE, HE IS A SKILLED ADMIRAL WHO SERVES AS THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FOR WU'S ARMY. CONVINCED THAT HIS ALLY KONGMING IS TOO MUCH OF A THREAT, HE CURRENTLY SCHEMES FOR HIS DEATH.

ZHUGE LIANG KONGMING:
MASTERFUL STRATEGIST AND FORMER STUDENT OF SHUI JING. IN VOLUME 21, HE YIELDS TO LIU BEI'S PERSISTENCE AND DECIDES TO BECOME HIS SUBJECT.

SANGOKUSHI'S CAST OF CHARACTERS
PART 2: OTHER MINOR CHARACTERS

CAI MAO:
FORMER GENERAL OF LIU BIAO, WHO BECAME THE SUPREME ADMIRAL OF WEI'S NAVY WHEN JINGZHOU SURRENDERED TO CAO CAO. IN VOLUME 25, HE IS FRAMED BY ZHOU YU'S PLOT AND THUS EXECUTED BY CAO CAO.

CAO REN:
GENERAL SERVING UNDER CAO CAO.

CAO HONG:
GENERAL AND COUSIN TO CAO CAO. IN VOLUME 6, HE SAVES CAO CAO FROM CERTAIN DEATH.

CAO SONG:
CAO CAO'S FATHER AND A FORMER GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL. IN VOLUME 8, HE IS KILLED BY TAO QIAN'S ESCORT AND FORMER YELLOW TURBAN, ZHANG KAI.

DING YUAN:
GOVERNOR OF BINGZHOU AND LU BU'S FOSTER-FATHER. HE OBJECTED TO DONG ZHUO'S SCHEME TO PLACE PRINCE CHENLIU AS THE EMPEROR OF HAN, EARNING DONG ZHUO'S WRATH. IN VOLUME 4, HE IS BETRAYED AND KILLED BY HIS FOSTER-SON, LU BU, WHO THEN DEFECTS TO SERVE DONG ZHUO.

EMPRESS DOWAGER DONG:
MOTHER TO THE FORMER EMPEROR LING AND GRANDMOTHER TO EMPEROR XIAN. IN VOLUME 3, EMPRESS HE ORDERS FOR HER DEATH TO SECURE HER SON LIU BIAN'S THRONE AS THE NEXT EMPEROR OF HAN.

GAO SHUN:
ONE OF LU BU'S TRUSTED GENERALS. HE IS EXECUTED ALONG WITH HIS LORD IN VOLUME 14.

GUO SI:
A GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED DONG ZHUO. AFTER DONG ZHUO'S DEATH, HE AND LI JUE TOOK CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND DID AS THEY PLEASED UNTIL THE EMPEROR RUNS TO CAO CAO FOR PROTECTION.

HUANG GAI:
LOYAL GENERAL OF WU, WHOSE FAMILY HAS SERVED THE SUN FAMILY FOR THREE GENERATIONS.

HE JIN:
OLDER BROTHER OF EMPRESS HE. ORIGINALLY A SIMPLE BUTCHER, HE BECAME A GENERAL WHEN HIS YOUNGER SISTER BECAME EMPEROR LING'S CONSORT. IN VOLUME 3, HE ATTEMPTS TO ELIMINATE THE TEN ATTENDANTS, ONLY TO BE DISSUADED FROM DOING SO BY HIS YOUNGER SISTER. HE IS LATER KILLED BY THE TEN ATTENDANTS.

HOU CHENG:
ONE OF LU BU'S GENERALS. IN VOLUME 14, HE, ALONG WITH GENERALS WEI XU AND SONG XIAN, BETRAYS LU BU AND DEFECTS TO CAO CAO'S SIDE.

HUA XIONG:
FAMED GENERAL SERVING UNDER DONG ZHUO. IN VOLUME 5, HE DEFEATS SUN JIAN'S ARMY BUT IS LATER KILLED BY GUAN YU.

JI PING:
IMPERIAL PHYSICIAN OF HAN WHO, WITH DONG CHENG, PLOTS TO POISON CAO CAO. IN VOLUME 17, CAO CAO DISCOVERS THEIR PLOT AND EXECUTES HIM.

JIANG GAN:
CHILDHOOD FRIEND OF ZHOU YU AND NOW AN ADVISOR TO CAO CAO. IN VOLUME 25, HE FAILS TO PERSUADE ZHOU YU TO DEFECT TO CAO CAO, AND INADVERTANTLY HELPS ZHOU YU'S PLOT TO FRAME CAI MAO.

JIANG QIN:
GENERAL OF WU. FORMERLY A BANDIT ALONG WITH ZHOU TAI, BUT BECAME SUN CE'S SUBORDINATE OUT OF ADMIRATION FOR SUN CE'S FATHER, SUN JIAN.

LADY FUYOU:
FICTIONAL CHARACTER CREATED BY MITSUTERU YOKOYAMA AND LIU BEI'S FIRST LOVE. ZHANG FEI FORMERLY SERVED HER FAMILY, WHO WERE MASSCRED BY THE YELLOW TURBAN REBELS.

LADY MI:
LIU BEI'S FIRST WIFE.

LADY SUN:
SUN QUAN'S YOUNGER SISTER AND LIU BEI'S WIFE AS OF VOLUME 29. SHE IS QUITE FOND OF WEAPONS AND MARTIAL ARTS TO THE POINT THAT SHE HAS HER ATTENDANT LADIES DRESSED IN FULL ARMOUR. HER REAL NAME IS NOT KNOWN BUT SHE IS ALSO KNOWN AS SUN REN, SUN RENXIAN, SUN SHANGXIAN, AND SUN AN.

LI JUE:
A GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED DONG ZHUO. AFTER DONG ZHUO'S DEATH, HE AND GUO SI TOOK CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND DID AS THEY PLEASED UNTIL THE EMPEROR RUNS TO CAO CAO FOR PROTECTION.

LI DIAN:
SCHOLARLY GENERAL UNDER THE SERVICE OF CAO CAO.

LIU BIAN:
THE SON OF EMPRESS HE AND BRIEFLY THE EMPEROR OF HAN AFTER THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER, EMPEROR LING. IN VOLUME 4, HE WAS DEPOSED BY DONG ZHUO AND LATER KILLED ALONG WITH HIS MOTHER BY LI RU.

LIU FENG:
LIU BEI'S ADOPTED SON. ORIGINALLY THE NEPHEW OF LIU MI, HE WAS ADOPTED BY LIU BEI WHO TOOK A LIKING TO HIM IN VOLUME 21.

LU ZHI:
LIU BEI'S FORMER TEACHER AND THE PALACE COMMANDER WHO WAS PLACED IN CHARGE OF LEADING THE HAN ARMY AGAINST THE YELLOW TURBANS. HE WAS LATER DEMOTED FOR FAILING TO BRIBE ONE OF THE IMPERIAL MESSENGERS.

LIU QI:
ELDEST SON OF LIU BIAO AND THE OLDER BROTHER OF LIU CONG.

MA LIANG:
ONE OF LIU BEI'S ADVISORS. FOURTH YOUNGEST OF THE FIVE MA BROTHERS, AND IS NOTED FOR HIS INTELLECT AND WHITE EYEBROWS.

MI ZHU:
ONE OF LIU BEI'S ADVISORS.

SUN QIAN:
ADVISOR/EMISSARY SERVING LIU BEI. (HIS ROLE IS MUCH SMALLER IN SANGOKUSHI COMPARED TO THE ORIGINAL NOVEL.)

YU JIN:
GENERAL SERVING CAO CAO. (IN RECORDS OF THE THRE KINGDOMS, WRITTEN BY CHEN SHOU, YU JIN IS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE FIVE TOP GENERALS FOR WEI.)

ZHANG BAO:
ZHANG JIAO'S YOUNGER BROTHER AND THE YELLOW TURBAN'S GENERAL OF THE LAND. HE WAS KILLED BY LIU BEI IN VOLUME 2.

ZHANG JIAO:
LEADER OF THE YELLOW TURBAN REBELLION. HE PASSED AWAY DUE TO ILLNESS IN VOLUME 3.

ZHANG ZHAO/ZHANG HONG:
THE TWO GENIUSES OF JIANGDONG, ALSO KNOWN AS THE "TWO ZHANGS." AFTER SUN CE'S ADMANT INSISTENCE, THEY DECIDE TO SERVE HIM AND HELP HIS CAMPAIGN TO CONQUER JIANGNAN AND JIANGDONG.

ZHOU TAI:
GENERAL OF WU. FORMERLY A BANDIT ALONG WITH JIANG QIN BUT BECAME SUN CE'S SUBORDINATE OUT OF ADMIRATION FOR HIS FATHER, SUN JIAN.

SANGOKUSHI (ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS)

三国志

VOLUME 33
TREACHEROUS PATH TO SHU

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（月刊『コミックトム』掲載）

GRAND MAP OF 41 COUNTIES OF SHU

HM?

?

YES.
GOOD, THEN WE'RE ALMOST THERE AT JINGZHOU.

YES, WHY DO YOU ASK?

MIGHT I ASK IF THE CHARIOTEER ZHANG SONG OF SHU RIDES BEFORE ME?

I AM ZHAO YUN ZILONG, FAITHFUL RETAINER TO LIU BEI OF JINGZHOU. I HAVE COME HERE TO ESCORT YOU.

YOU MUST BE TIRED FROM MAKING THE DIFFICULT JOURNEY TO HERE. WHY DON'T YOU TAKE A RESPITE OVER HERE UNDERNEATH THE SHADE.

HM...

PLEASE,
I INSIST.

MY LORD TREATS ALL HIS GUESTS WITH RESPECT AND KINDNESS. PLEASE THINK NOTHING STRANGE OF IT.

IF YOU DON'T MIND ME ASKING, WHY DOES THE IMPERIAL UNCLE GIVE THIS KIND OF WELCOME TO A LOWLY FIGURE SUCH AS MYSELF?

THANK YOU.

ALLOW ME TO OFFER YOU A DRINK.

OH, THANK YOU.

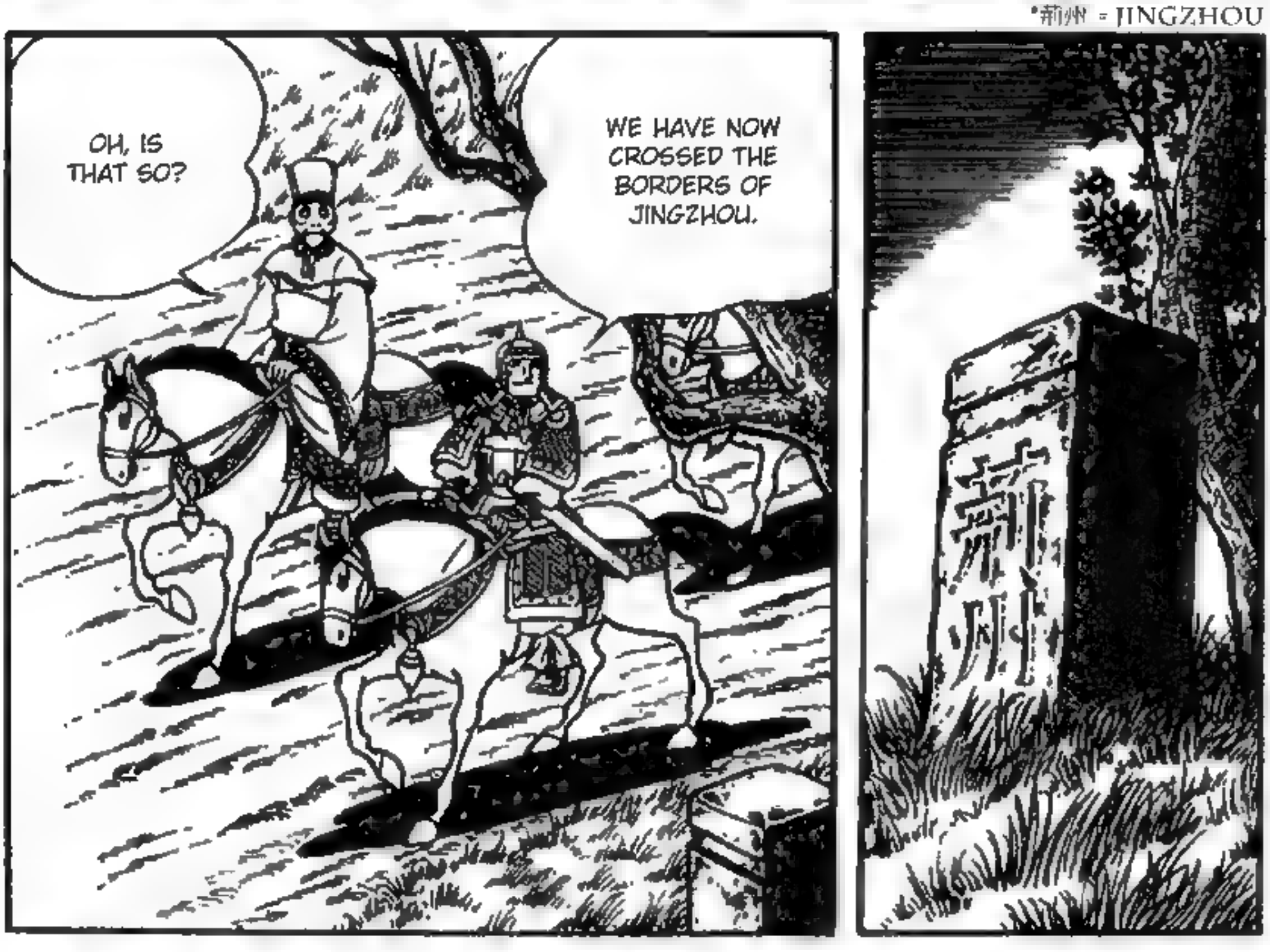
THE REST OF YOU GENTLMEN SHOULD HAVE A DRINK TOO.

HMM, I'VE HEARD OF LIU BEI'S REPUTATION AS A KIND HOST BUT TO THINK HE WOULD SEND ONE OF HIS MOST TRUSTED OFFICERS TO START ESCORTING ME FROM WUCHANG...

COMPARED TO THE TREATMENT I RECEIVED FROM CAO CAO, THE DIFFERENCE IS THAT OF THE HEAVENS AND MUD.

THEN I SHALL ESCORT YOU FROM HERE TO JINGZHOU.
AHH, THAT DRINK HIT JUST THE SPOT. YOUR LORD'S KIND WELCOME HAS WIPED AWAY MY FAITGUE.

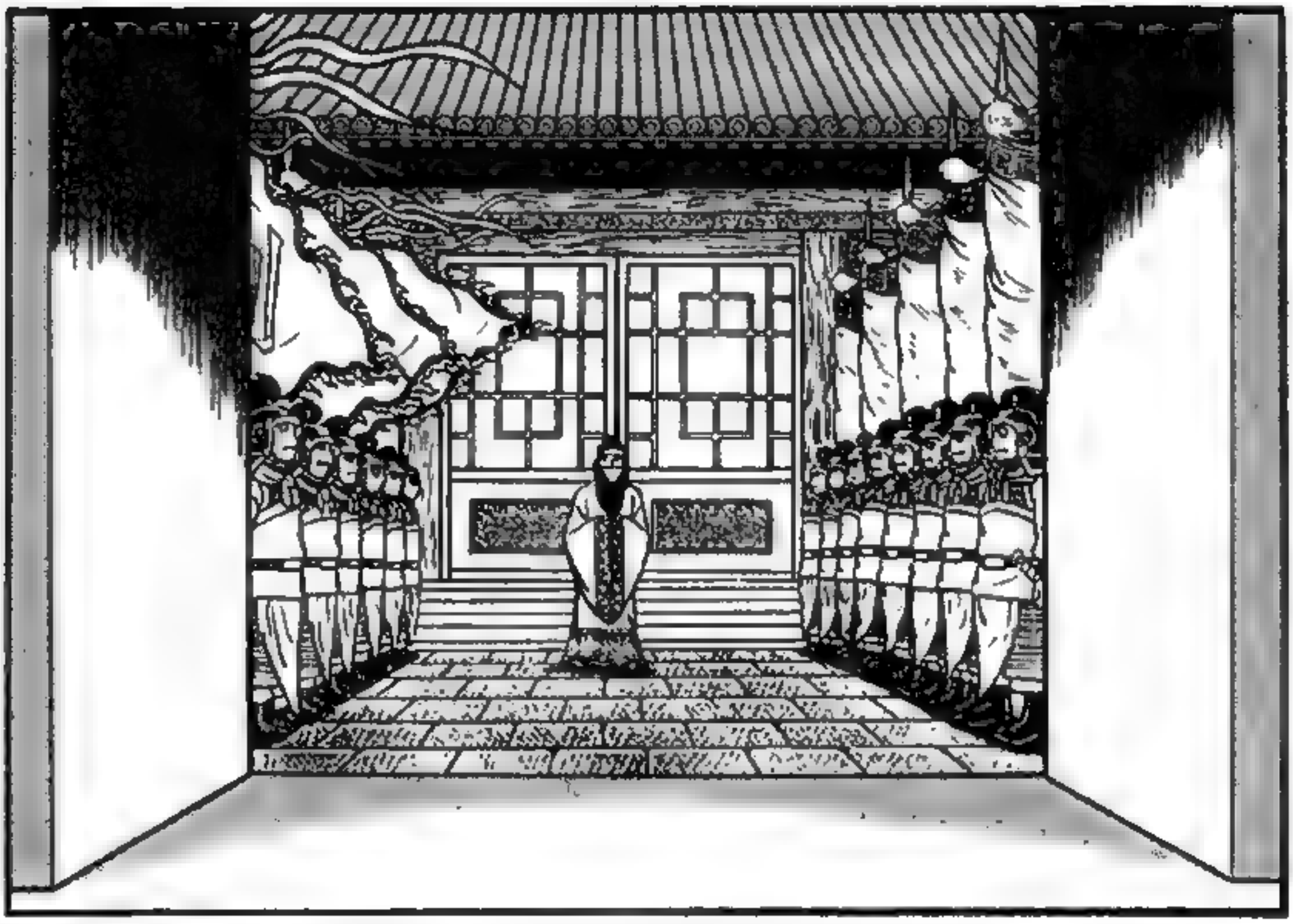
*荊州 = JINGZHOU


OH, IS THAT SO?
WE HAVE NOW CROSSED THE BORDERS OF JINGZHOU.

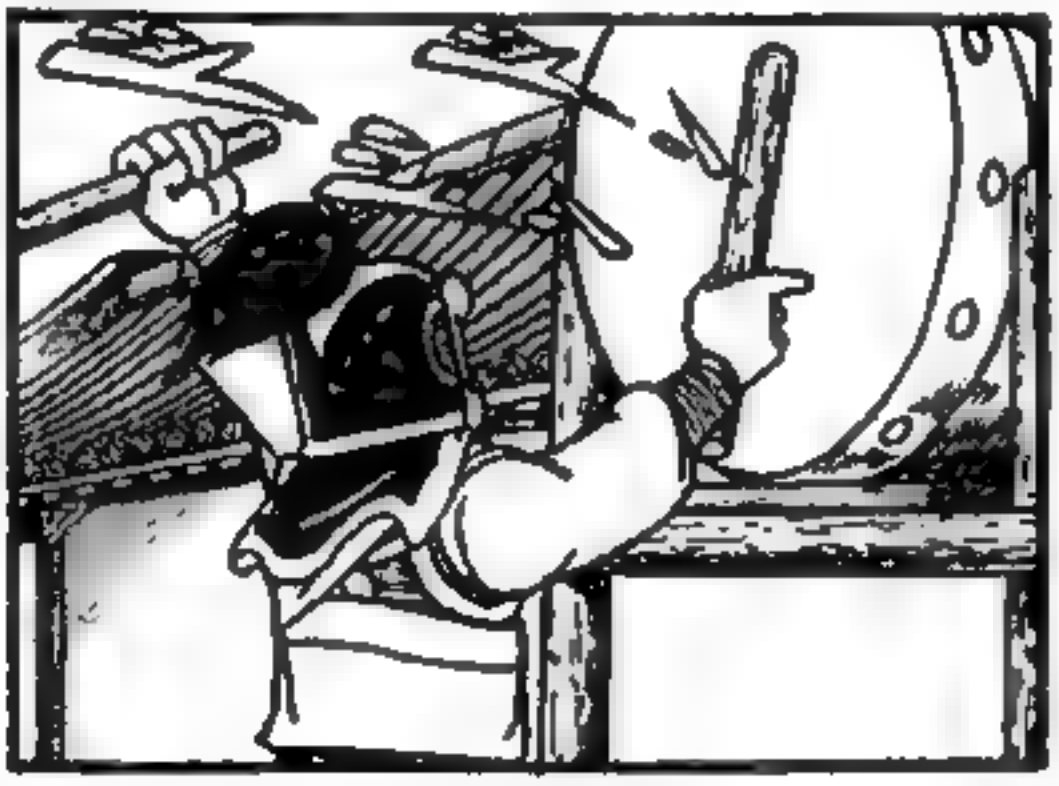
I'VE ALREADY ARRANGED A PLACE FOR YOU TO SPEND THE NIGHT.

NOT AT ALL. YOU ARE MY LORD'S HONOURED GUEST.

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO THANK YOU.



WELCOME, TRAVELLER. I AM GUAN YU YUNCHANG.

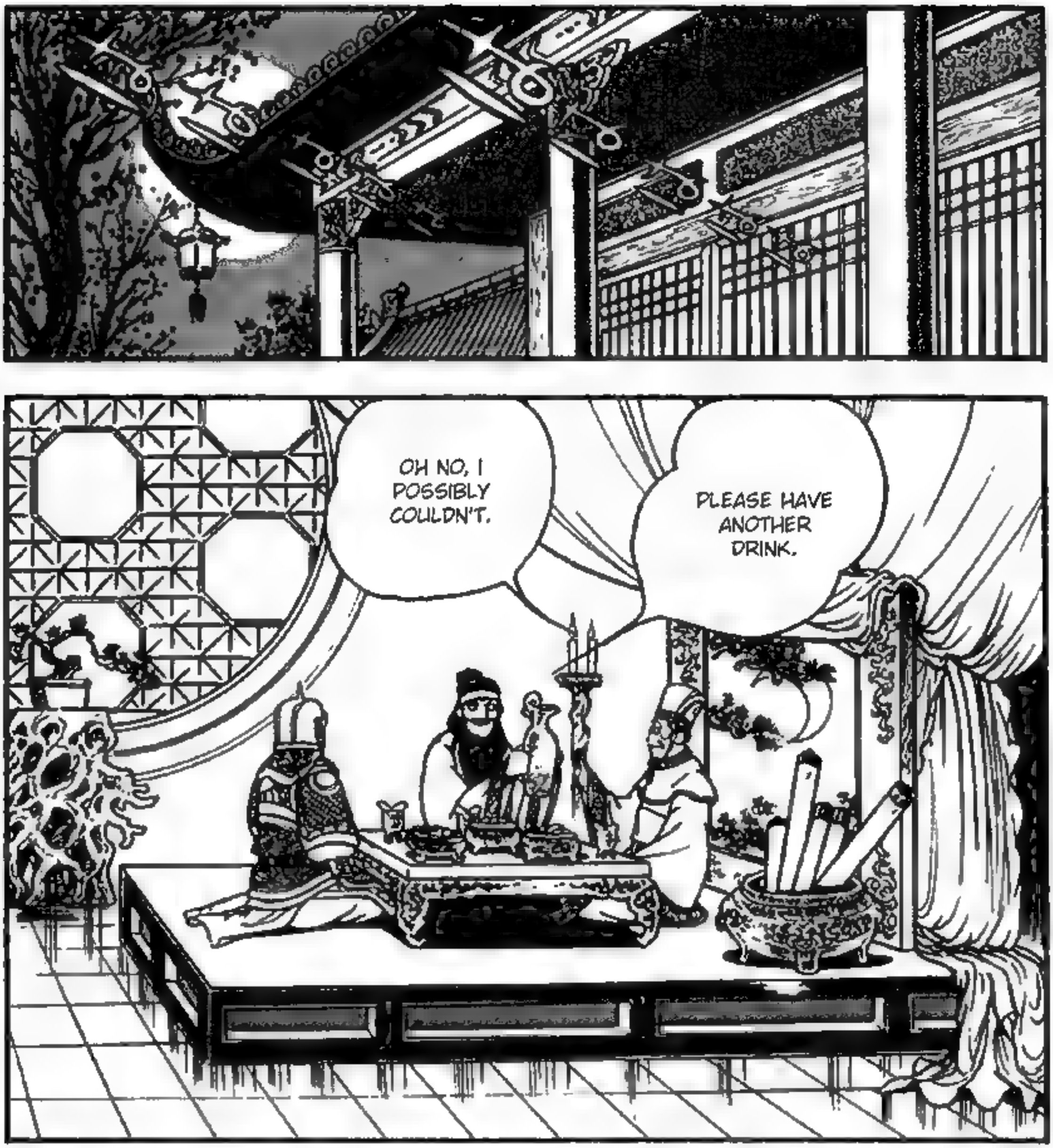


G-GUAN YU!?

YOU NEED NOT SHOW ME SUCH RESPECT. I AM MERELY A SERVANT HERE TO ATTEND TO HIS LORD'S GUEST.

FORGIVE ME FOR GREETING YOU WHILE ON MY HORSE.

YOU MUST BE TIRED FROM YOUR LONG JOURNEY. PLEASE COME INSIDE AND REST.


OH NO, I POSSIBLY COULDN'T.
PLEASE HAVE ANOTHER DRINK.

ALLOW ME TO SHOW YOU TO YOUR ROOM THEN.

I MUST RETIRE EARLY TONIGHT, FOR THE LONG JOURNEY HAS LEFT ME TIRED.
. . .

THIS WAY.

NO, I INSIST.

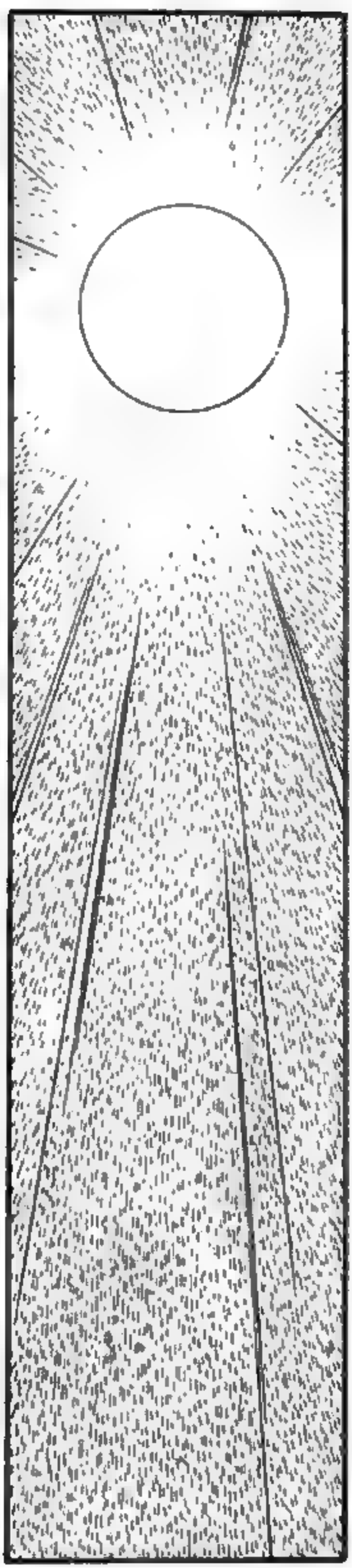
N-NONSENSE! THERE IS NO NEED FOR GENERALS OF YOUR STATURE TO DO SUCH A THING.

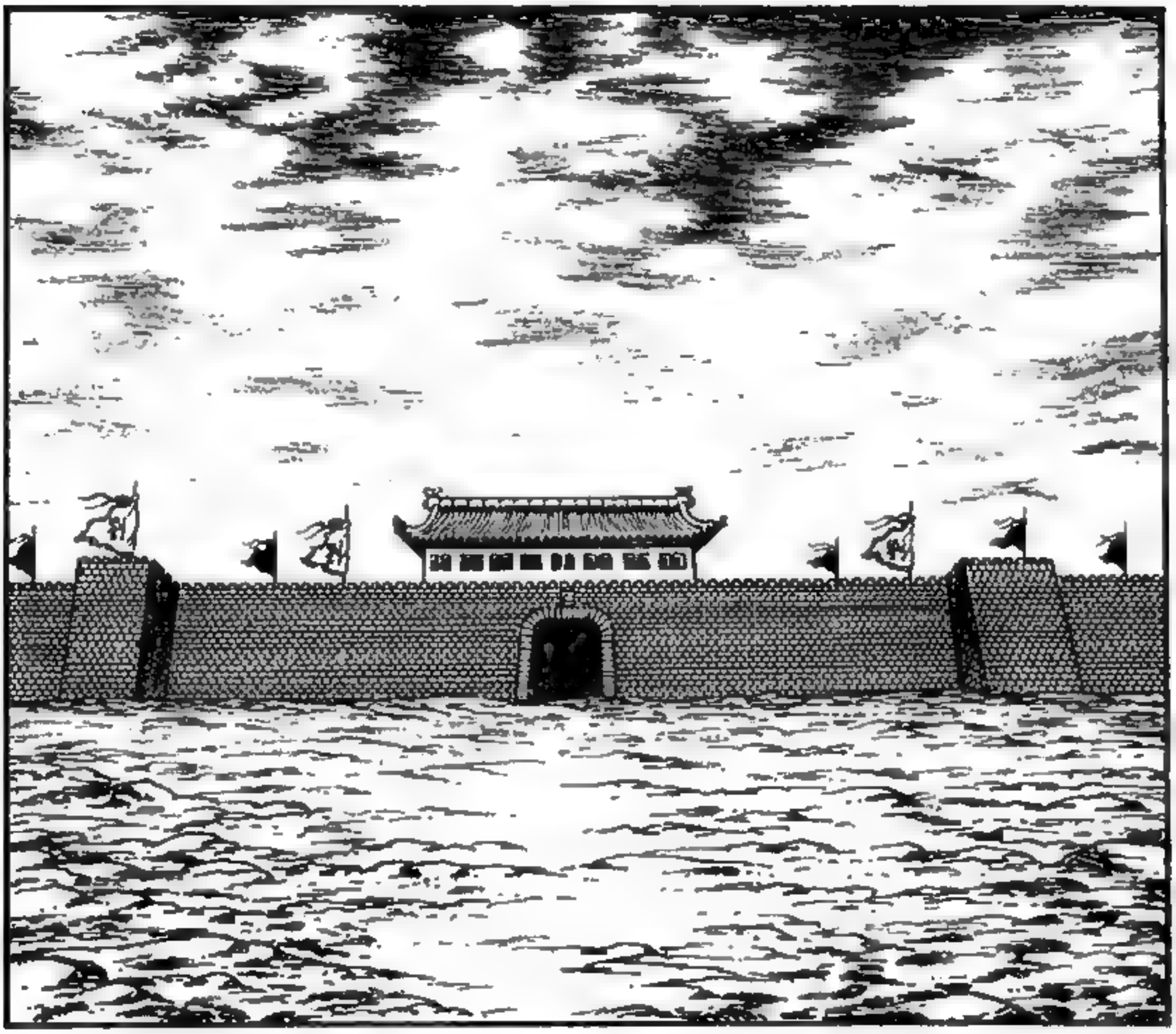
I WISH YOU A GOOD NIGHT'S REST.

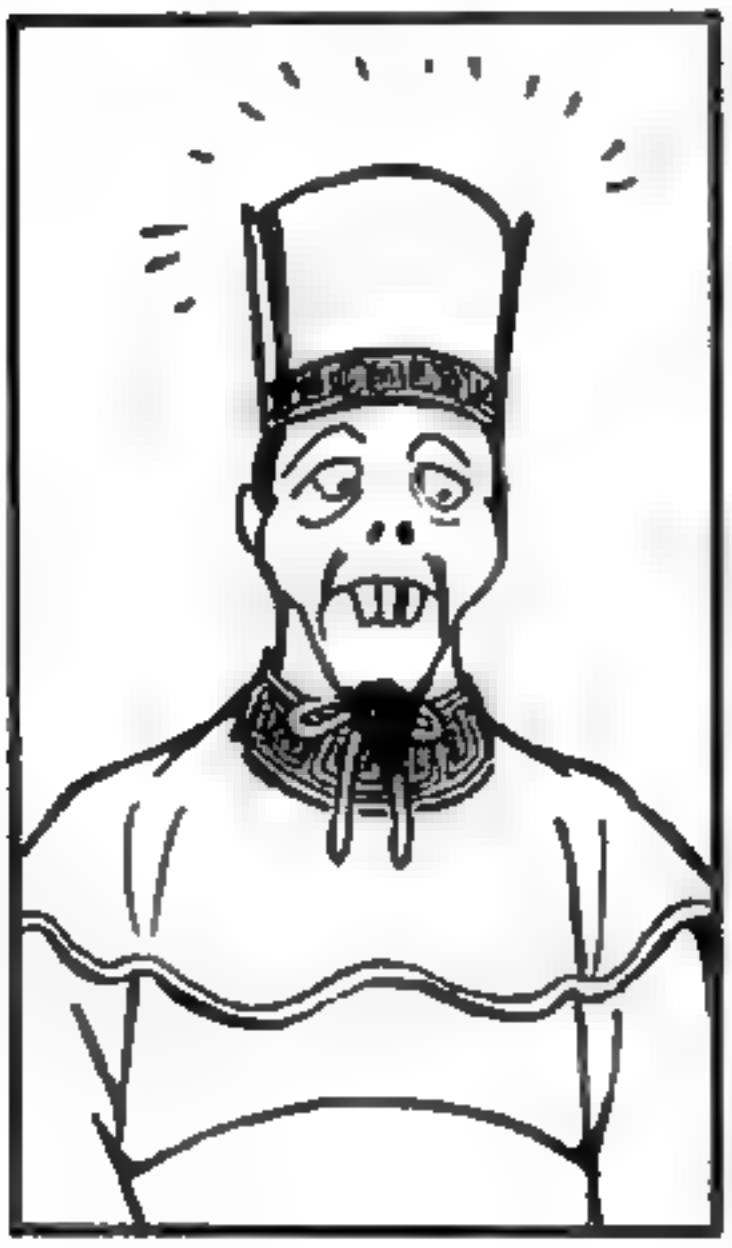
HERE IS YOUR ROOM FOR THE NIGHT.

THANK YOU, SIR.

I AM INDEBTED.
NOW THEN, ZHAO ZILONG AND I SHALL ESCORT YOU TO JINGZHOU.



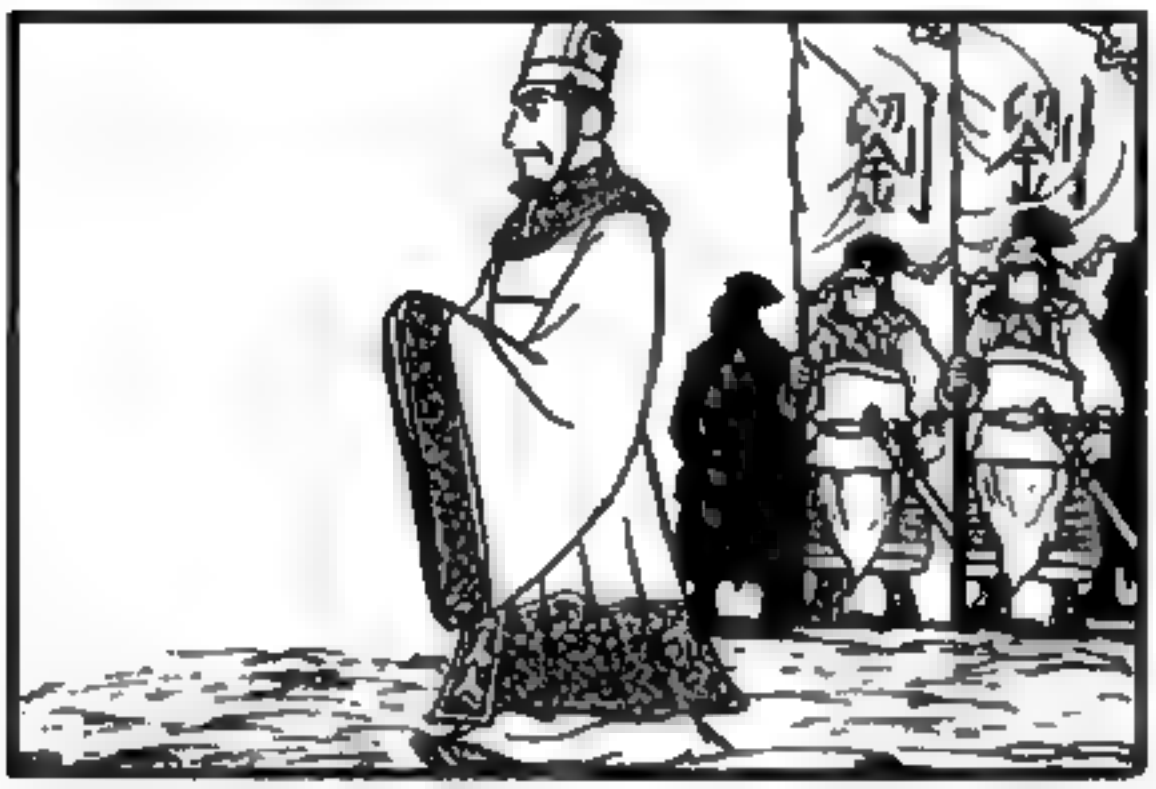




THE IMPERIAL UNCLE HAS WHAT!?

IT SEEMS MY LORD HAS COME OUT TO PERSONALLY WELCOME YOU TO THE CITY.

IS THAT...?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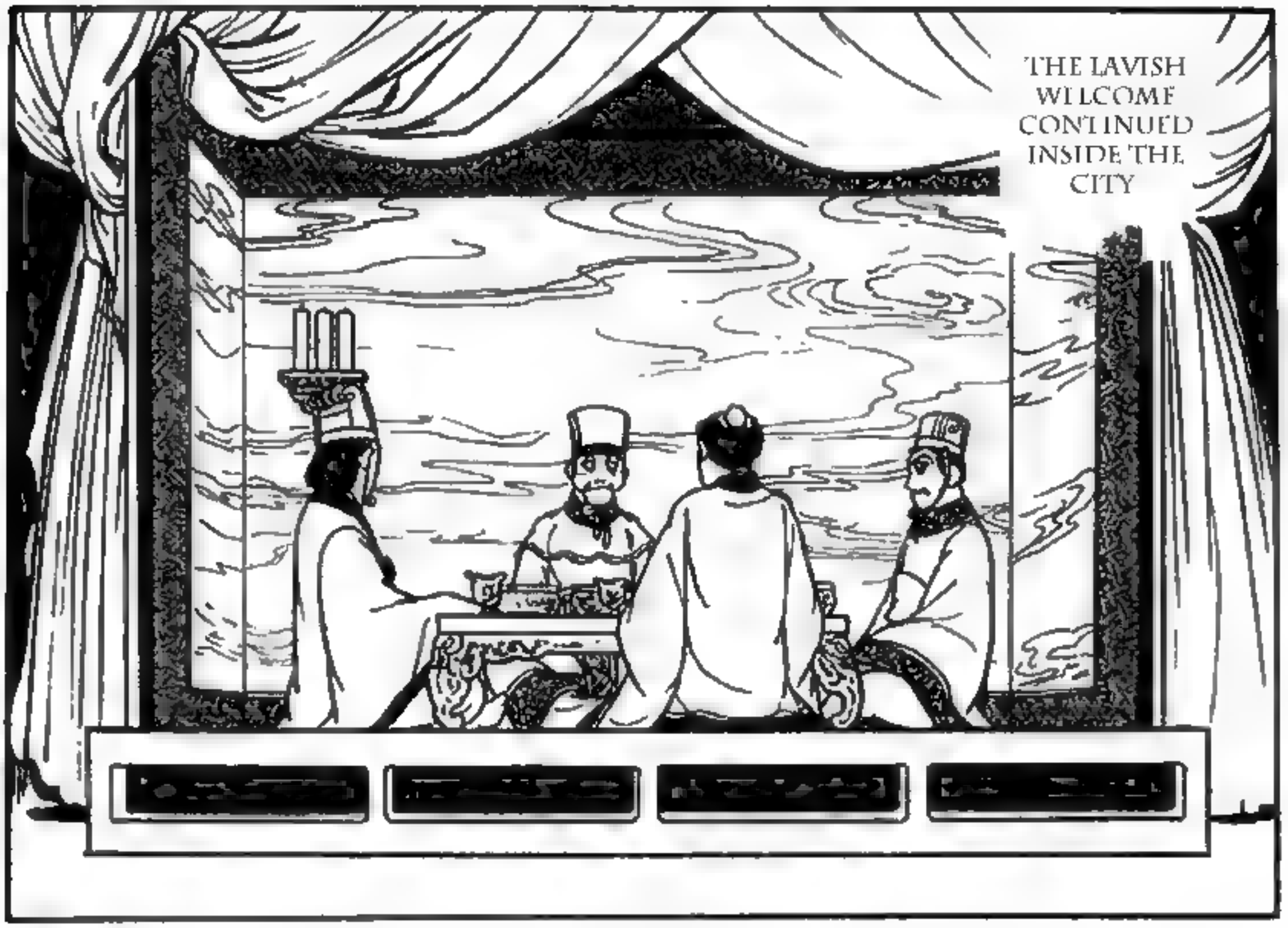
I AM SPEECHLESS THAT THE IMPERIAL UNCLE HIMSELF WOULD PERSONALLY WELCOME MY WORTHLESS SELF INTO THE CITY.
PLEASE STAND, ZHANG SONG. THERE IS NO NEED FOR SUCH STIFF FORMALITIES.

I'VE LONG HEARD OF YOUR REPUTATION AS A MAN OF TALENT. IT IS MY PLEASURE TO WELCOME YOU TO JINGZHOU.
PLEASE FEEL AT HOME WHILE YOU'RE HERE AND SHARE ME SOME OF YOUR WISDOM.


THE LAVISH WELCOME CONTINUED INSIDE THE CITY

I WONDER IF LIU BEI HAS NO INTEREST IN SHU...?

HOWEVER, LIU BEI MERELY CHATTED ABOUT COMMON THINGS AND DID NOT ASK ZHANG SONG ABOUT SHU AT ALL.

OH, MY LORD HARDLY OWNS ANY TERRITORY. JINGZHOU AND ITS COUNTIES ARE MERELY BORROWED FROM WU FOR THE TIME BEING. EVEN THOUGH I'VE TOLD HIM TIME AND TIME AGAIN THAT HE HAS A GOOD ENOUGH CLAIM TO APPROPRIATE THESE LANDS FOR HIMSELF, HE REFUSES TO HEED MY ADVICE.

IMPERIAL UNCLE, MIGHT I ASK HOW MANY COUNTIES ARE CURRENTLY UNDER YOUR CONTROL?

HE FEELS IT WOULD NOT BE RIGHT, ESPECIALLY SINCE HE HAS JUST TAKEN SUN QUAN'S YOUNGER SISTER AS HIS WIFE.

IT IS MOST REGRET-TABLE THAT MY LORD REFUSES TO TAKE A BOLDER APPROACH IN CLAIMING WHAT IS RIGHTFULLY HIS.

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT!? EVEN THOUGH VARIOUS REBELS ARE CARVING OUT MORE AND MORE LANDS FOR THEMSELVES, THE UNCLE TO THE EMPEROR OF HAN OWNS NOT A SINGLE PIECE OF TERRITORY!

NO, YOU ARE MISTAKEN, IMPERIAL UNCLE.

PLEASE, THAT'S ENOUGH. I AM NOT WORTHY ENOUGH TO EVEN DESIRE MORE TERRITORY.

THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN IS ONLY GIVEN TO THOSE WHO ARE JUST AND VIRTUOUS, TRAITS THAT YOU ARE WIDELY KNOWN FOR. MOREOVER, GIVEN THAT YOU ARE OF IMPERIAL LINEAGE, IT WOLD NOT BE STRANGE EVEN IF YOU PRESSED A CLAIM FOR THE EMPERORSHIP.

NOW LET'S PUT ASIDE THIS HEAVY TALK AND ENJOY OUR DRINKS.

HAHA, SURELY YOU JEST. I AM NOWHERE NEAR AS VIRTUOUS OR TALENTED AS YOU THINK.

3 DAYS PASSED SINCE...

DURING HIS STAY, THERE WAS NOT A SINGLE MOMENT IN WHICH ZHANG SONG FELT MISTREATED OR UNCOMFORTABLE.

LIU BEI IS TRULY AS IMPRESSIVE AS THE RUMOURS SAY. HIS VIRTUES HAVE NO DOUBT DRAWN THE LOYAL SERVICE OF SCHOLARS AND WARRIORS ALIKE. IF ONLY SUCH A MAN COULD BECOME THE EMPEROR, THE REALM WOULD FINALLY BE AT PEACE...

LEAVING ALREADY?

OF COURSE, I UNDERSTAND.

I'M AFRAID I MUST. THE PAST 3 DAYS HAVE BEEN MOST ENJOYABLE BUT I MUST ATTEND TO URGENT MATTERS IN SHU...

OH NO, YOU NEED NOT GO SO FAR!

ALLOW ME TO AT LEAST ESCORT YOU OUTSIDE THE CITY.

.....

NO, I INSIST. WHO KNOWS WHEN WE MIGHT HAVE THE CHANCE TO TALK AGAIN? I'D LIKE TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE TIME WE HAVE TOGETHER.

AND SO, LIU BEI ESCORTED ZHANG SONG FOR 10 LI.

I KNOW YOU WILL BE BUSY IN SHU, BUT I HOPE YOU WILL REMEMBER THAT I WILL ALWAYS GIVE YOU A WARM WELCOME IN JINGZHOU.

AND AFTER WALKING 10 LI, A FAREWELL BANQUET WAS HELD.

HOWEVER, ALLOW ME TO GIVE YOU ONE PIECE OF ADVICE. JINGZHOU IS NOT FIT TO BE A PERMANENT BASE.

I FEEL EMBARRASSED THAT I HAVE NO WAY TO REPAY YOUR KIND TREATMENT FOR THE PAST 3 DAYS.

THE TWO TIGERS OF THE NORTH AND SOUTH GREEDILY EYE JINGZHOU NIGHT AND DAY.

SHU, OF COURSE. IT BOASTS NATURAL BARRIERS, FERTILE LANDS, AND HARD-WORKING CITIZENS. MANY WISE SHU SCHOLARS ALREADY ADMIRE YOU.

YES, I'M WELL AWARE OF CAO CAO AND SUN QUAN'S INTENTIONS BUT WHERE ELSE COULD I POSSIBLY GO?

ABSOLUTELY NOT! LIU ZHANG AND I ARE OF THE SAME IMPERIAL BLOOD. HOW COULD I STEAL LAND FROM MY VERY RELATIVE?

SO WHY NOT LEAD YOUR ARMY THERE AND CARVE OUT A REAL TERRITORY FOR YOURSELF?

THE WORLD IS UNDERGOING VIOLENT UPHEAVALS THESE DAYS. AS REGRETTABLE AS IT IS, MY LORD LIU ZHANG IS NOT CAPABLE ENOUGH TO SURVIVE IN THESE CHAOTIC TIMES.

IMPERIAL UNCLE LIU, SOME CHANCES ARE ONLY OFFERED BY THE HEAVENS FOR A BRIEF TIME. FAILING TO CAPITALIZE ON THEM WILL LEAVE YOU FACING A DEAD END FOR THE REST OF YOUR DAYS.

BUT HOW WOULD THE WORLD SEE ME IF I DO SUCH A THING?

A MAN CANNOT ACCOMPLISH GREAT THINGS IF HE FRETS OVER THE CONSQUENCES OF SMALL THINGS.

BUT I WAS SHOCKED UPON ARRIVING AT THE CAPITAL. THE MEN WERE ARROGANT AND PRONE TO CORRUPTION. EVEN THE CHANCELLOR HIMSELF BOORISHLY USED HIS AUTHORITY TO HAVE THE IMPERIAL COURT SUBMIT TO HIS WILL.

LET ME BE FRANK WITH YOU. ZHANG LU OF HANZHONG CURRENTLY PLANS TO INVADE SHU. THE REAL PURPOSE OF MY TRIP WAS TO ASK CAO CAO TO HELP DEFEND SHU. IN ESSENCE, SHU WOULD BE GIVING UP ITS AUTONOMY TO CAO CAO FOR PROTECTION.

BUT AS YOU YOURSELF SAID, SHU BOASTS EXCELLENT NATURAL BARRIERS. HOW COULD I POSSIBLY LEAD AN ARMY THERE?

I URGE YOU TO MAKE SHU AS YOUR BASE FROM WHICH YOU CAN WORK TO STOP CAO CAO'S AMBITIONS AND PACIFY THE EMPIRE.

PLEASE HOLD ON A MOMENT.

?
THIS IS MY GIFT TO YOU, IMPERIAL UNCLE.

ISN'T THIS A MAP OF SHU!?

BUT WHY GIVE ME SUCH A...
THAT MAP WILL ALLOW YOU TO EASILY ENTER AND EXIT SHU.

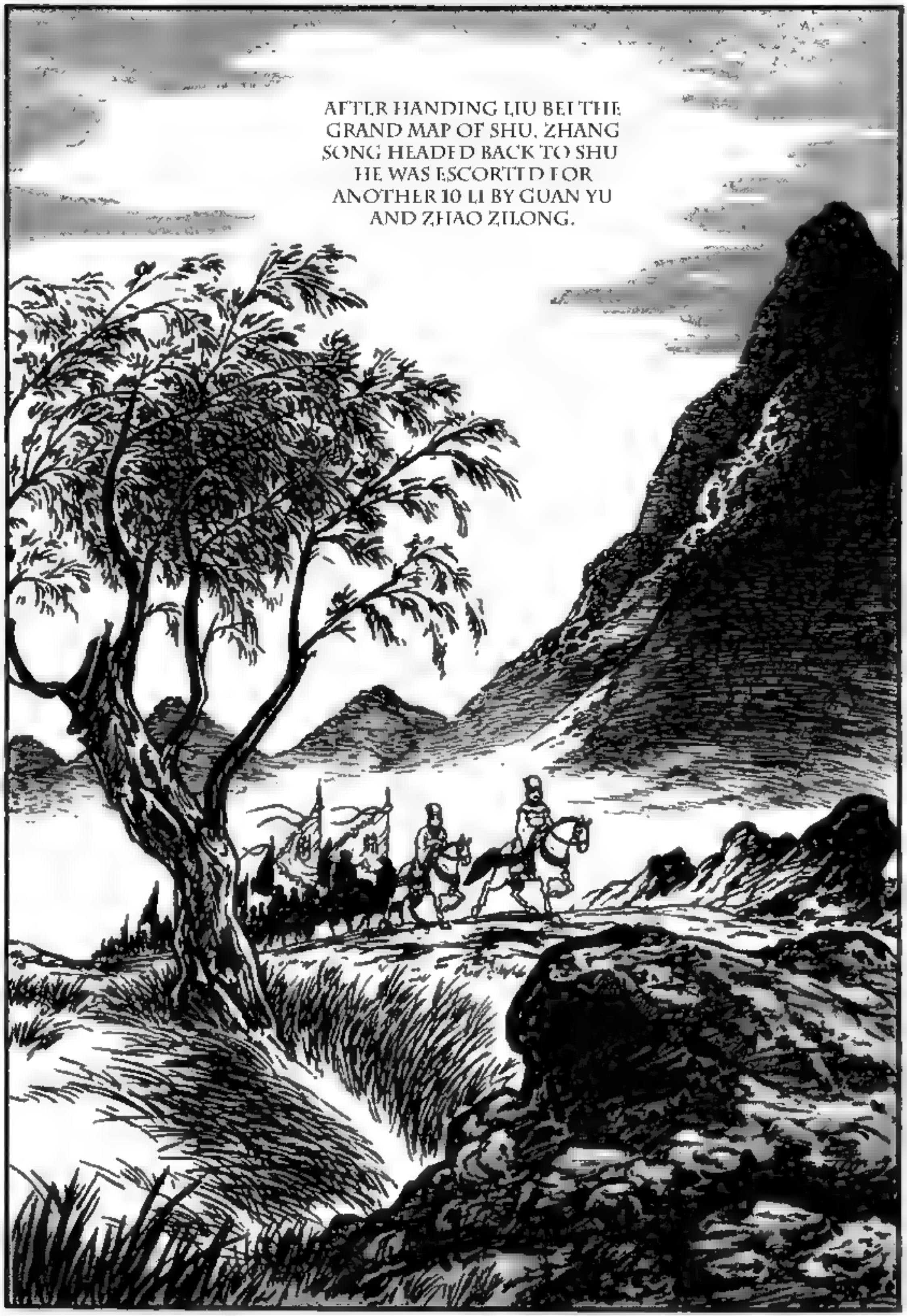
I'VE COME TO THE CONCLUSION IN THESE PAST 3 DAYS THAT YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE FIT TO GOVERN THE EMPIRE.

HM...

IF ZHANG LU OF HANZHONG CONQUERS SHU FIRST, IT WILL BE TOO LATE. I URGE YOU TO MAKE NO DELAYS.

I HAVE TWO DEAR FRIENDS BY THE NAME OF FA ZHEN AND MENG DA. I WILL ASK THEM TO COME HERE TO JINGZHOU SO PLEASE DISCUSS YOUR FUTURE COURSE OF ACTION WITH THEM.

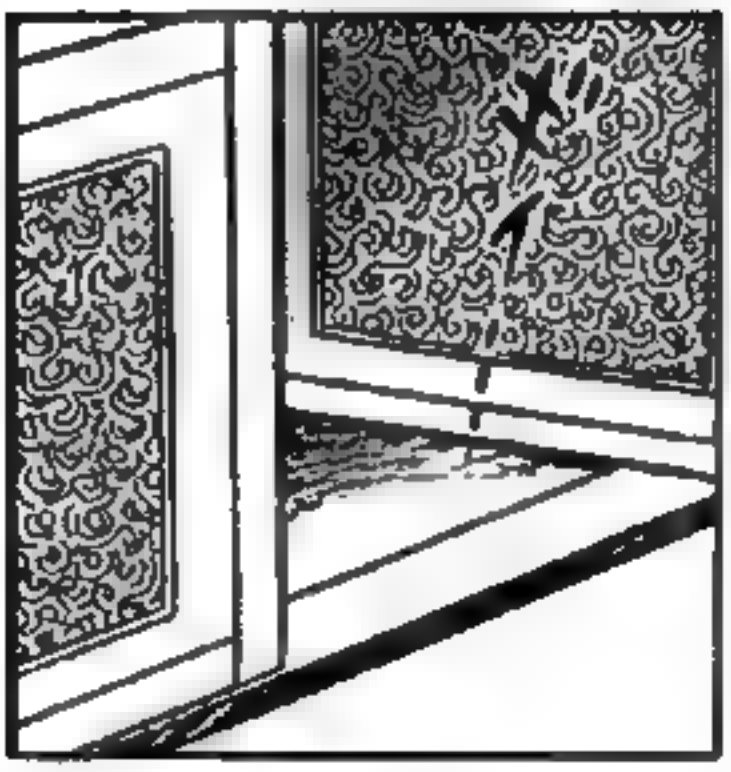
I MUST EXCUSE MYSELF NOW.


AFTER HANDING LIU BEI THE GRAND MAP OF SHU, ZHANG SONG HEADED BACK TO SHU HE WAS ESCORTED FOR ANOTHER 10 LI BY GUAN YU AND ZHAO ZILONG.

FA ZHENG AND MENG DA

ALRIGHT.

YOU FELLOWS HEAD ON HOME FIRST. I HAVE SOMEWHERE I NEED TO DROP BY.

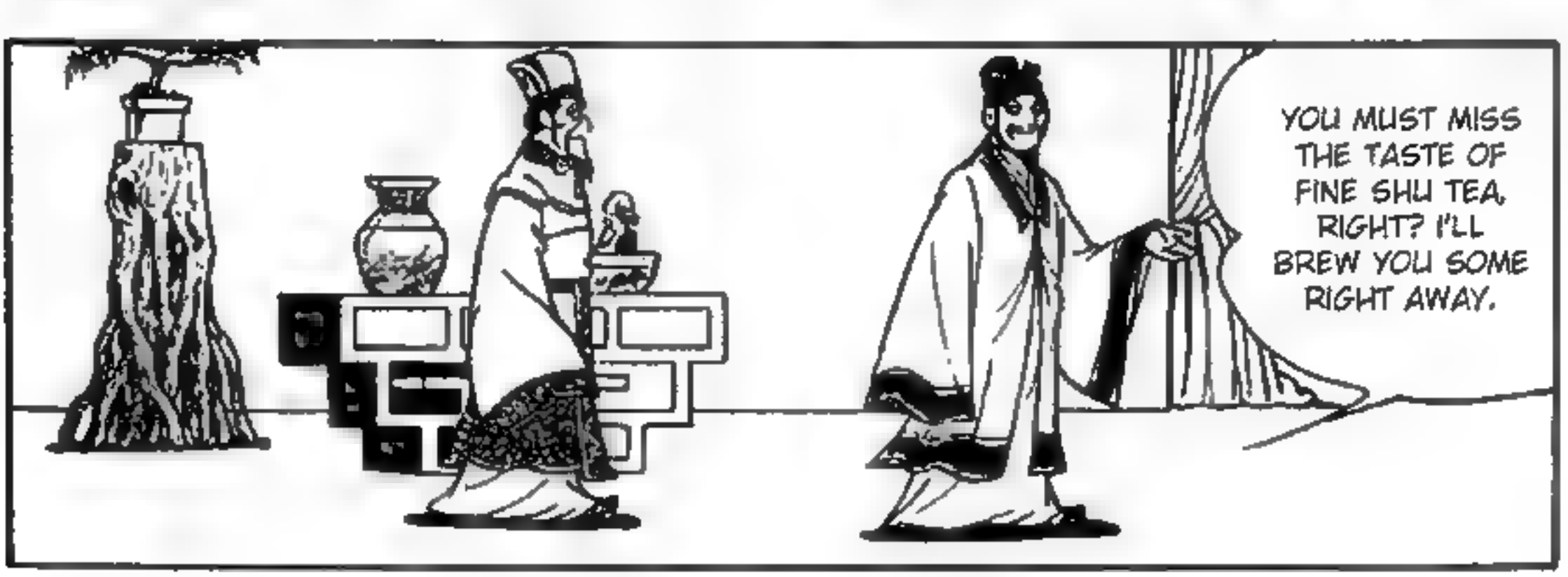


AH, MY DEAR FRIEND! WHEN DID YOU COME BACK?

FA ZHENG, ARE YOU THERE?

I SEE. WELL, COME IN.
YES, I NEEDED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOMETHING...

JUST NOW?
JUST NOW, ACTUALLY.


YOU MUST MISS THE TASTE OF FINE SHU TEA, RIGHT? I'LL BREW YOU SOME RIGHT AWAY.

I BELIEVE SHU IS BOUND TO BE CONQUERED IN THESE TIMES SO THE BEST THING WE CAN HOPE FOR IS A NEW BENEVOLENT LORD.

YES, I WANTED TO ASK YOU ABOUT THE FUTURE OF SHU.

SO WHAT'S THIS THING YOU WANTED TO TALK TO ME SO URGENTLY ABOUT?

ISN'T THAT THE WHOLE REASON WHY YOU TRAVELLED ALL THE WAY TO XUCHANG AND MEET CAO CAO?

I INSTINCTIVELY JUDGED THAT LETTING A MAN LIKE CAO CAO IN OUR LANDS WOULD ONLY INVITE RUIN.

DIDN'T GO SO WELL?

YES, BUT IT DIDN'T GO SO WELL.

YES, THAT IS THE QUESTION.

THEN WHO CAN WE TURN TO?

LIU BEI...?

I HAPPENED TO STOP BY JINGZHOU AND MEET LIU BEI WHILE ON MY WAY HOME.

AND THE IMPERIAL UNCLE IS A MAN WHOM I'VE WANTED TO MEET FOR SOME TIME NOW.

YOU KNOW, I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT LIU ZHANG WAS INCOMPETENT,

HMM...

I'LL SEND A SERVANT TO CALL HIM HERE IMMEDIATELY.

IT SEEMS WE'RE IN AGREEMENT SO LET US NOT SAY ANYMORE. HOWEVER, I THINK IT'D BE BEST TO BRING THIS MATTER UP WITH MENG DA AS WELL.

IT'S ME, MENG DA! ARE YOU FELLOWS IN THERE?

YES, WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.

HMM, AND THE FIRST PLACE YOU DROPPED BY IS FA ZHENG'S HOME?

YES.

JUST NOW.
GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, ZHANG SONG. WHEN DID YOU GET BACK?

YES, SO I CAME TO DISCUSS WHAT WE SHOULD DO NOW.

JUDGING BY YOUR REACTION, I TAKE IT THE MEETING WITH CAO CAO DIDN'T GO SO WELL, AM I RIGHT?

EXACTLY. FA ZENG AND I'VE JUST COME TO AN AGREE-MENT. CAN YOU GUESS WHO?

AH, I SEE. SO YOU'RE DISCUSSING WHICH PERSON WE CAN ENTRUST SHU TO?

HMM, WELL I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU MEN, BUT I'D PERSONALLY PICK LIU BEI.

WE ALSO PICKED LIU BEI.

WHO DID YOU PICK?

I DON'T KNOW.

IF THAT'S THE CASE, WHY THE HELL DID YOU EVER GO ALL THE WAY TO XUCHANG?

SO... WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW?

HA HA HA HA

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

WELL FIRST, I HAVE TO REPORT TO LIU ZHANG.

I'LL TRY TO CONVINCE OUR LORD TO HAVE HIM SEND YOU TWO AS HIS MESSENGERS TO LIU BEI.

WHISPER WHISPER

I'M AFRAID SO, MY LORD. CAO CAO TURNED OUT TO BE AN ARROGANT REBEL TERRORIZING THE IMPERIAL COURT FOR HIS PERSONAL BENEFIT. RATHER THAN PROTECT SHU, HE SHOWED MORE INTEREST IN CONQUERING IT FOR HIMSELF.

IT WAS UNSUC-CESSFUL?

THERE IS ANOTHER WAY WE CAN CHECK BOTH CAO CAO'S AND ZHANG LU'S AMBITIONS.

T-THEN WHAT MUST I DO?

THE CURENT LORD OF JINGZHOU IS LIU BEI, UNCLE TO THE HAN EMPEROR, AND A DISTANT RELATIVE TO MY LORD AS WELL. HE IS RENOWNED ACROSS THE REALM FOR HIS VIRTUE AND KINDNESS. EVEN THE GREAT CAO CAO TREMBLES WHEN HEARING LIU BEI'S NAME. NEEDLESS TO SAY, ZHANG LU CANNOT HOPE TO COMPETE WITH LIU BEI EITHER.

AND WHAT PLAN IS THAT?

HMM, I HAVE HEARD FAVOURABLE THINGS ABOUT LIU BEI...

IF MY LORD FORMS AN ALLIANCE WITH LIU BEI, HE'LL SURELY DEFEND SHU FROM THE LIKES OF CAO CAO AND ZHANG LU.

AS YOU WISH, MY LORD. I BELIEVE EITHER FA ZHENG OR MENG DA WILL BE SUITABLE FOR THIS MISSION.

ALRIGHT THEN. SEND A MESSENGER TO JINGZHOU IN ORDER TO INVITE LIU BEI TO SHU.

YES, MY LORD.

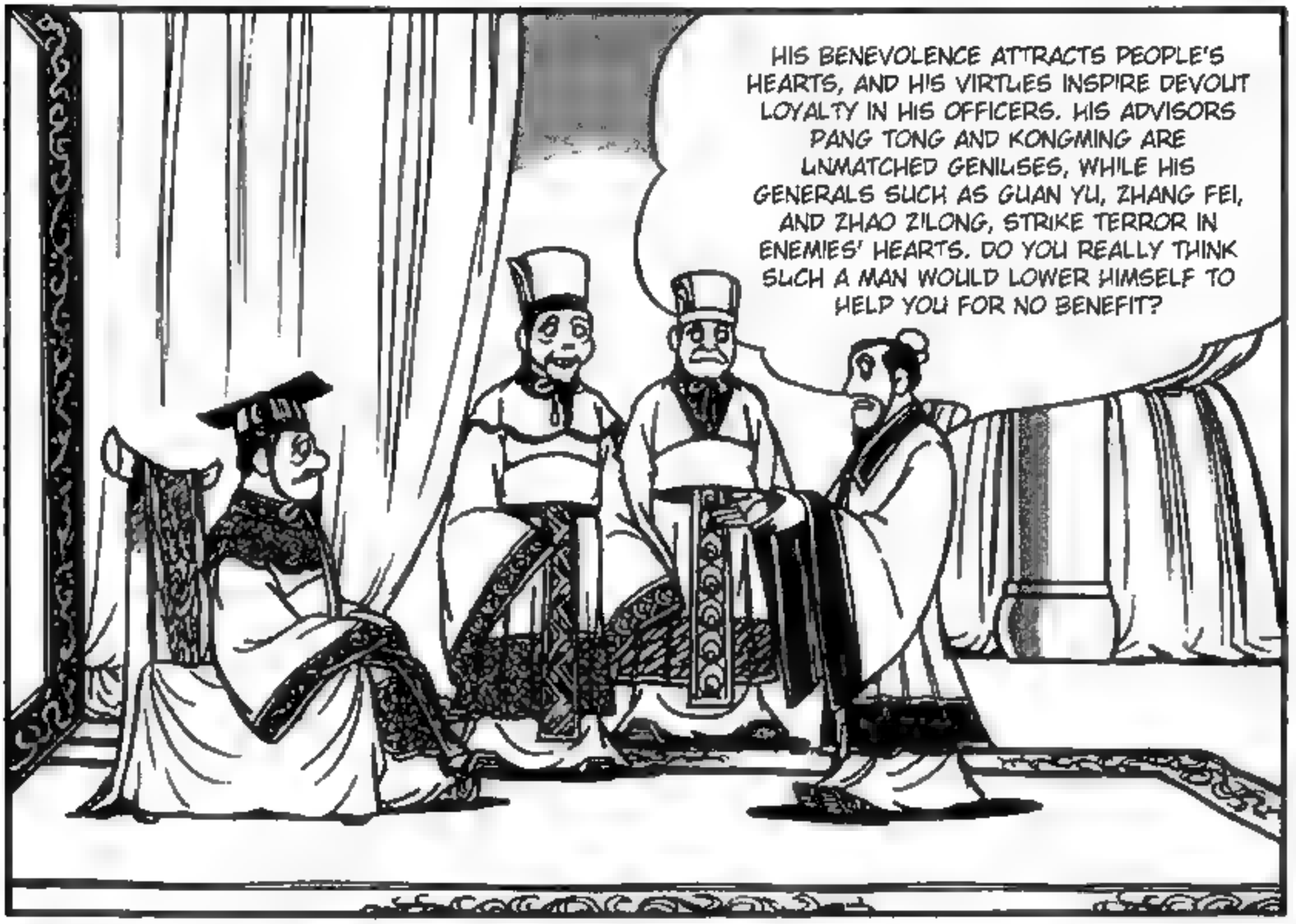
SEND FA ZHENG AS MY MESSENGER.

HOLD ON A MOMENT!

MY LORD, IF YOU ACCEPT ZHANG SONG'S PROPOSAL, YOU'D BE WILLINGLY HANDING OVER SHU AND ITS 41 COUNTIES TO ANOTHER MAN'S HANDS.

I KNOW JUST WHAT KIND OF MAN LIU BEI IS, AND IT'S NO WONDER EVEN THE GREAT CAO CAO FEARS HIM.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND, HUANG QUAN. I'M MERELY ASKING A BLOOD RELATIVE FOR HELP. HOW IS THAT THE SAME AS HANDING SHU OVER?


HIS BENEVOLENCE ATTRACTS PEOPLE'S HEARTS, AND HIS VIRTUES INSPIRE DEVOUT LOYALTY IN HIS OFFICERS. HIS ADVISORS PANG TONG AND KONGMING ARE UNMATCHED GENIUSES, WHILE HIS GENERALS SUCH AS GUAN YU, ZHANG FEI, AND ZHAO ZILONG, STRIKE TERROR IN ENEMIES' HEARTS. DO YOU REALLY THINK SUCH A MAN WOULD LOWER HIMSELF TO HELP YOU FOR NO BENEFIT?

NOT ONLY THAT, IF MY LORD INVITES LIU BEI TO SHU, HIS CHARISMA WILL NO DOUBT ATTRACT MANY FOLLOWERS, AND SHU WILL SOON FIND ITSELF WITH TWO RULERS. NO KINGDOM OR STATE CAN BE STABLE WHILE THERE IS MORE THAN ONE RULER.

SILENCE! WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE US DO IF ZHANG LU WERE TO INVADE RIGHT NOW AS YOU HURL BASELESS ACCUSATIONS!?

I HEAR ZHANG SONG DROPPED BY JINGZHOU ON HIS WAY BACK. IT'S ALMOST CERTAIN HE'S ALREADY PLOTTING WITH LIU BEI BEHIND MY LORD'S BACK!

YOU THINK OUR ARMY, WITH ALL ITS INEXPERIENCED SOLDIERS, CAN WITHSTAND A FULL-SCALE INVASION JUST BY DOING THAT!?

WE CAN FORTIFY OUR BORDERS, DIG MOATS, AND RAISE OUR RAMPARTS!

I MUST SIDE WITH ZHANG SONG ON THIS MATTER. STRENGTHENING OUR DEFENCES ALONE WILL NOT COMPLETELY SECURE SHU'S PEACE. I WILL SEND FA ZHENG AS A MESSENGER.

LIU BEI IS A MAN EVEN CAO CAO KEEPS ONE EYE ON AT ALL TIMES. INVITING HIM TO FIGHT OFF ZHANG LU WOULD BE AKIN TO CALLING A TIGER TO CHASE AWAY A WOLF.

WAIT, MY LORD. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO VOICE MY DISAPPROVAL ON INVITING LIU BEI.

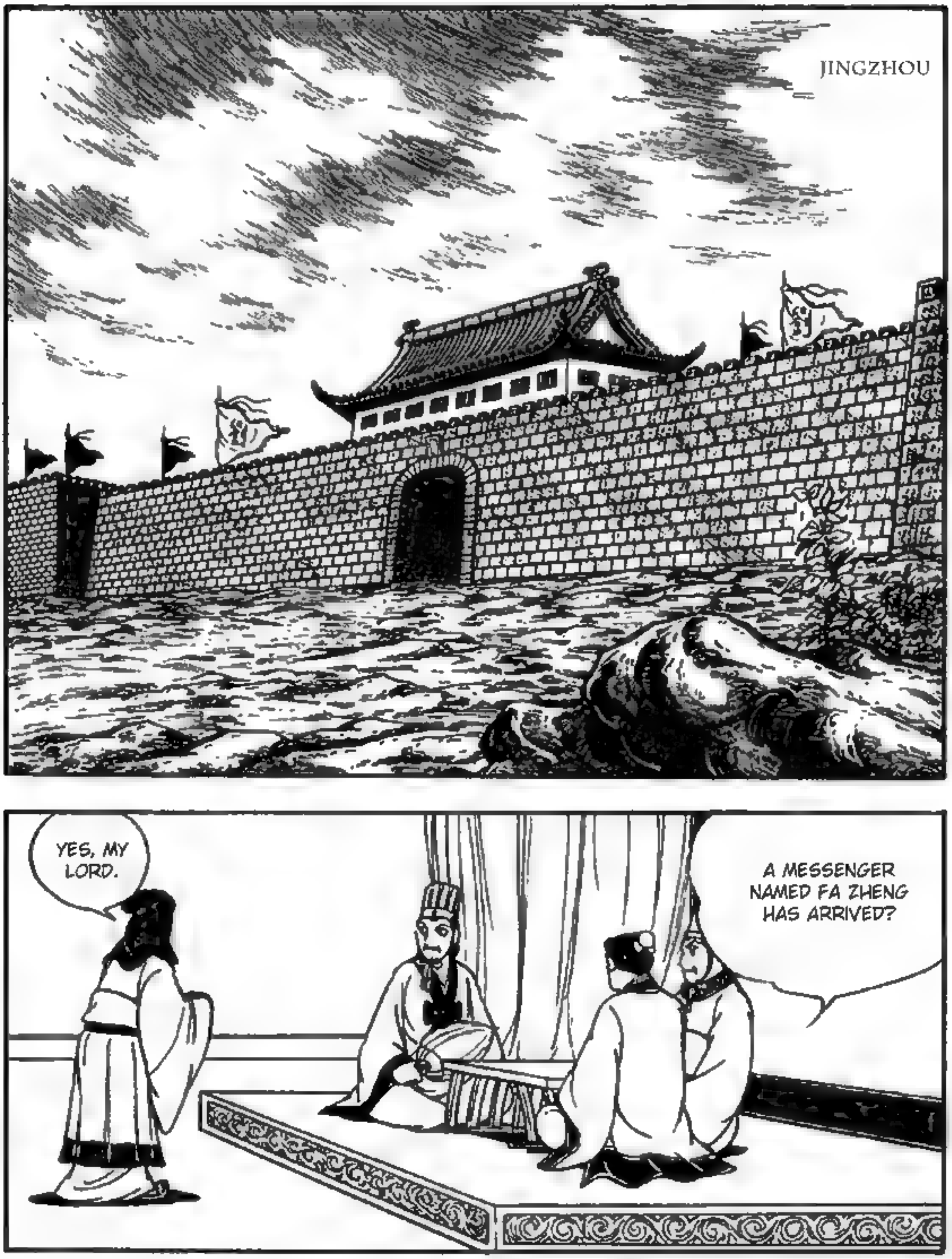
LIU BEI AND I ARE OF THE SAME BLOOD! THERE IS NO WAY HE WOULD TRY TO STEAL MY LANDS!

ENOUGH ABOUT WHETHER CAO CAO KEEPS ONE EYE OR TWO EYES ON LIU BEI! THAT ONLY PROVES HOW FORMIDABLE OF AN ALLY LIU BEI WOULD BE!

YES, SIR!

SEND FA ZHENG AT ONCE!

ADVANCE



AS YOU WISH.

LEAD HIM HERE AT ONCE.

PLEASE, COME SIT DOWN WITH ME.

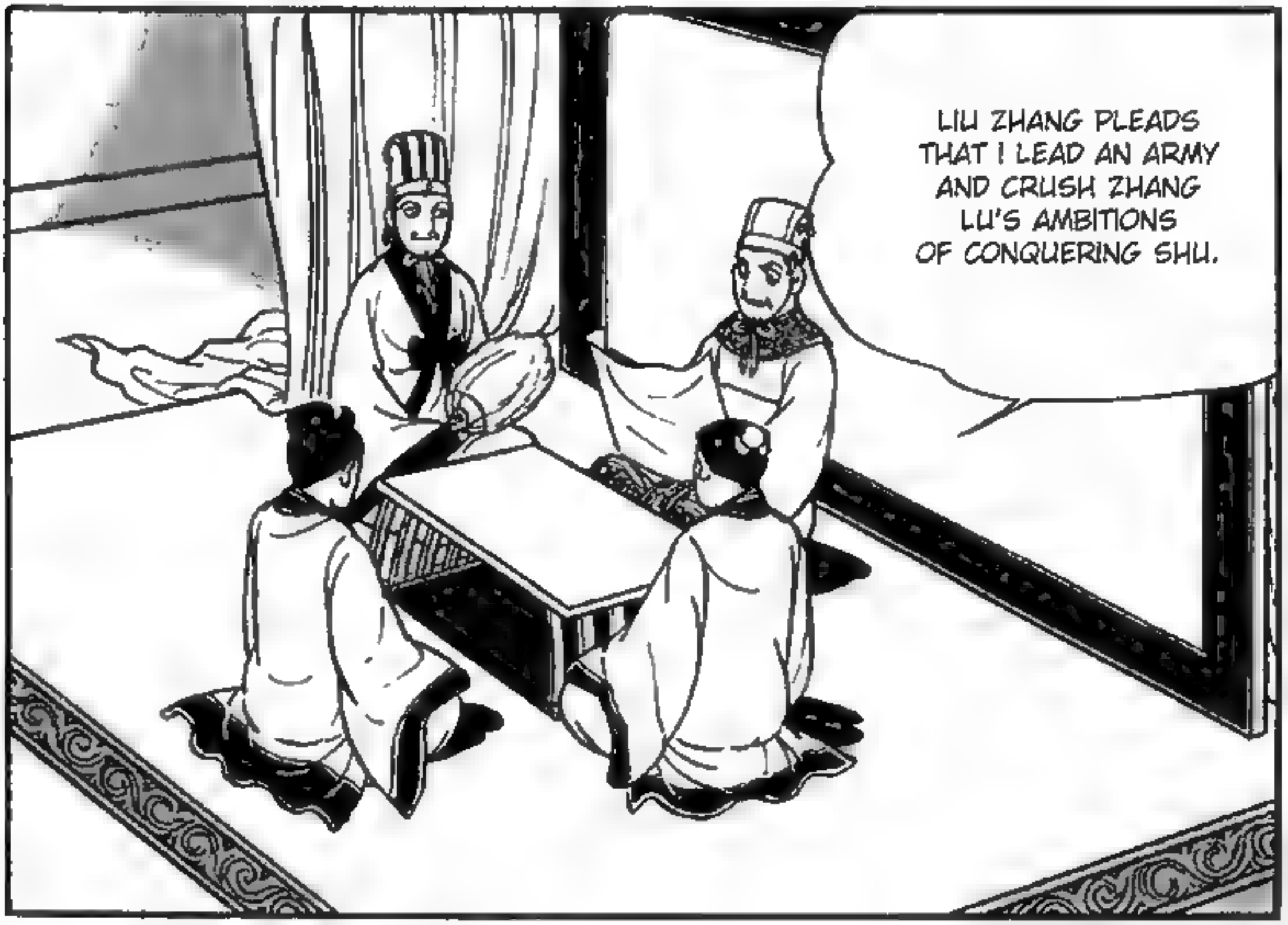
THANK YOU FOR MAKING THE LONG JOURNEY TO JINGZHOU.

I, FA ZHENG, HAVE COME HERE ON BEHALF OF MY LORD, LIU ZHANG.

THANK YOU.

THIS IS A LETTER FROM MY LORD.

WHAT DOES IT SAY, MY LORD?


LIU ZHANG PLEADS THAT I LEAD AN ARMY AND CRUSH ZHANG LU'S AMBITIONS OF CONQUERING SHU.

IF SO, I WOULD RATHER HAVE SHU FALL TO AN ENLIGHTENED RULER WITH THE STRENGTH TO SURVIVE THESE CHAOTIC TIMES.

REGRETTABLY, MY LORD DOES NOT HAVE THE ABILITY TO DEFEND SHU HIMSELF. I FEAR IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE SHU FALLS TO ANOTHER.

IF YOU HARBOR ANY GRAND AMBITIONS, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONQUER SHU FOR YOURSELF. I AND MY FRIENDS WILL GLADLY AID YOU EVEN AT THE COST OF OUR LIVES.

I SEE... HOWEVER, WITH SUN QUAN AND CAO CAO EYEING JINGZHOU, I CANNOT JUST SIMPLY LEAVE JINGZHOU. PLEASE GIVE ME SOME TIME TO PONDER ON THIS MATTER.

I'LL SHOW YOU TO YOUR ROOM.

IN THE MEANTIME, PLEASE GET SOME REST. YOU MUST BE TIRED AFTER THE LONG JOURNEY.

WHAT'S THE MATTER MY LORD? WHY DIDN'T YOU GIVE HIM YOUR ANSWER RIGHT ON THE SPOT?

HMM...

MY LONE ENEMY HAS BEEN CAO CAO UNTIL NOW.

BUT NOW, ZHANG SONG AND HIS ALLIES ENCOURAGE ME TO ATTACK LIU ZHANG. SHOULD I CHOOSE TO DECEIVE MY OWN RELATIVE AND STEAL SHU FROM HIM, ALL THE VIRTUES AND MORALS I'VE HELD SO DEARLY ONTO THUS FAR IN LIFE SHALL BE WASHED AWAY BY HYPOCRISY. SUCH AN ACTION MAY CAUSE ME TO LOSE HEAVEN'S FAVOUR.

THUS, I'VE ALWAYS STRIVED TO DO THE OPPOSITE OF WHATEVER CAO CAO DID. AS HE RUSHED ALONG, I CALMLY ASSESSED THE SITUATION. AS HE ABUSED HIS AUTHORITY, I TREATED OTHERS WITH KINDNESS. AND AS HE DECEIVED OTHERS, I VALUED HONESTY. AS YOU CAN SEE, THIS FORMED THE LARGE BASE OF MY MORAL PHILOSOPHY.

AND TRYING TO KEEP PROPER DECORUM IN A BURNING HOUSE WILL ONLY LEAD TO ONE'S DEATH.

WELL SAID, MY LORD. HOWEVER, I MUST REMIND YOU THAT WE LIVE IN AN AGE OF WAR AND CHAOS RIGHT NOW, NOT UNLIKE LIVING IN A BURNING HOME.

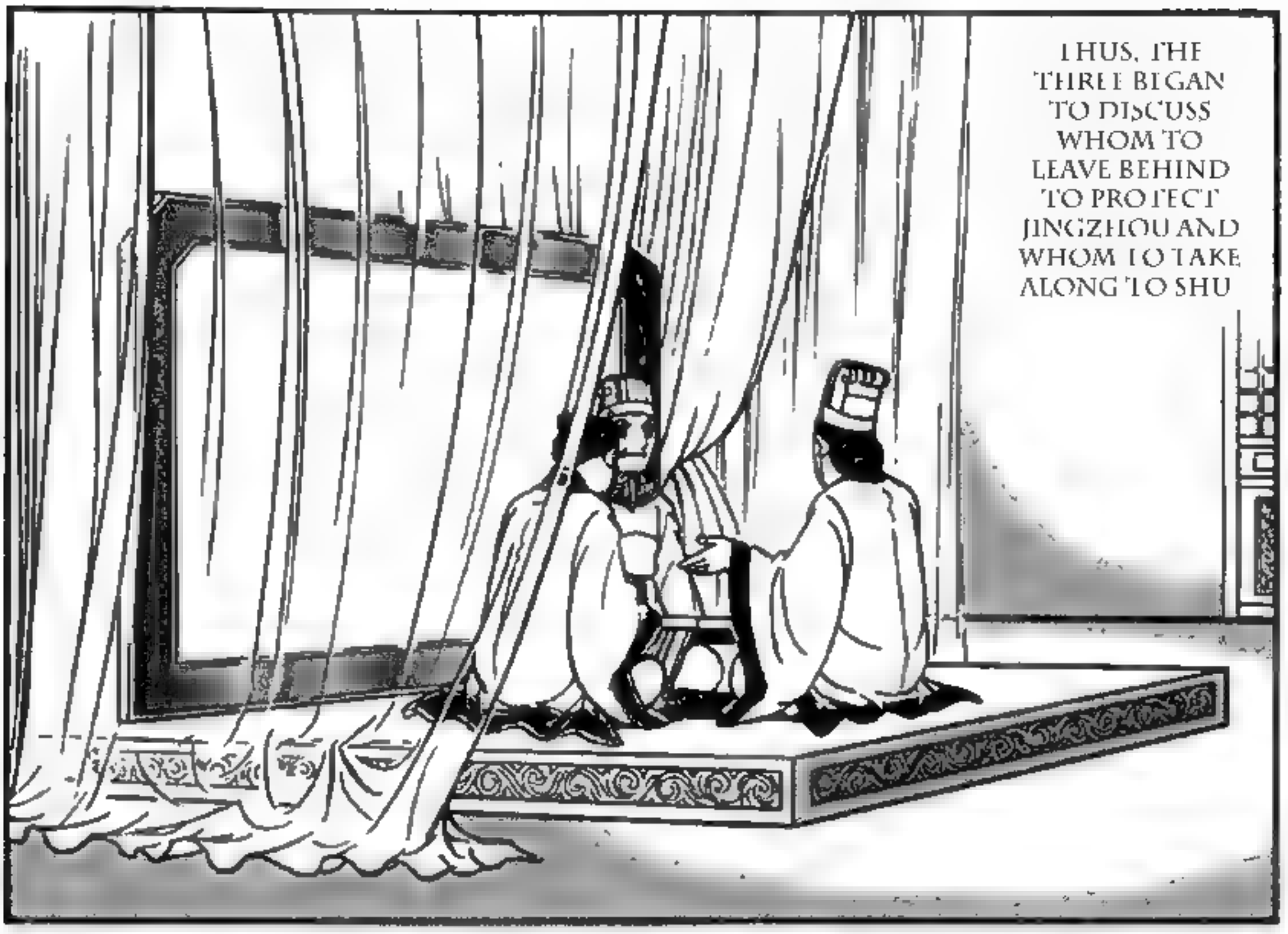
I SEE...

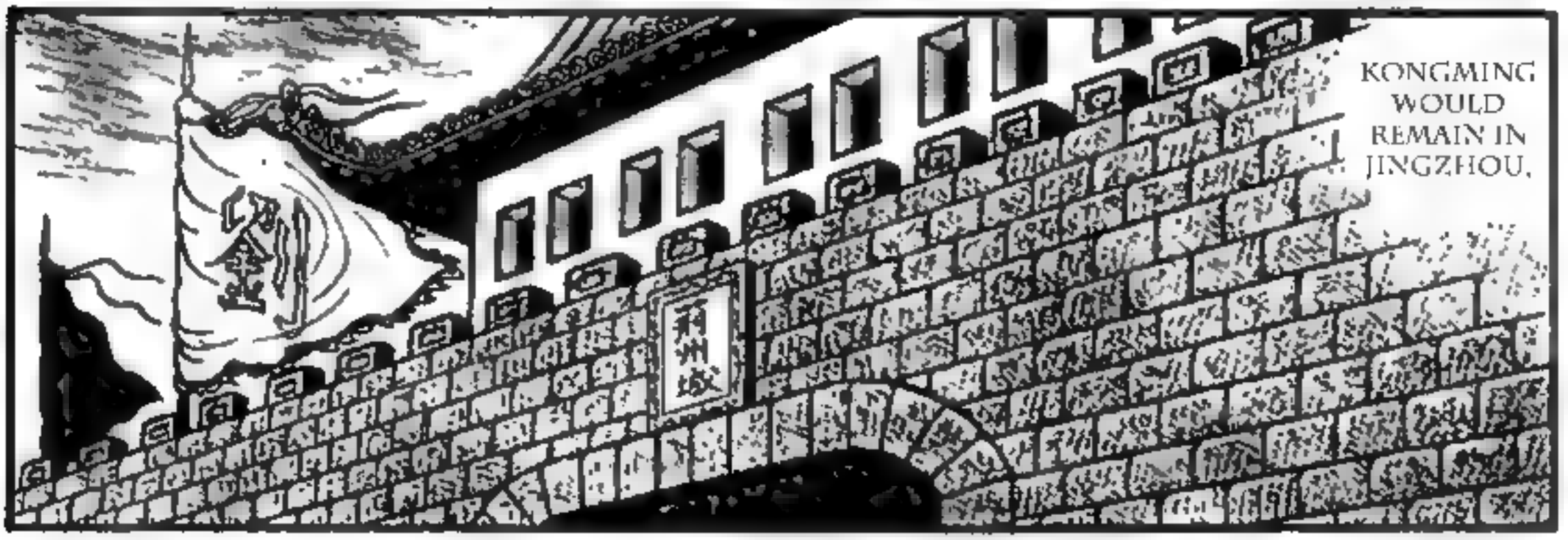
IN THESE TIMES, YOU MUST ATTACK BOTH THE WICKED AND THE FOOLISH, WHILE DEFENDING THE HELPLESS AND THE LOYAL. THESE WERE THE TEACHINGS ADVOCATED BY THE GREAT KINGS TANG OF SHANG AND WU OF ZHOU. AS LONG AS YOU DO NOT MISTREAT LIU ZHANG AFTER YOU'VE DEFEATED HIM, NO MAN CAN SAY YOU'VE ABANDONED YOUR PRINCIPLES.

THEN PERHAPS IT IS HEAVEN'S WILL THAT ZHANG SONG AND HIS ALLIES ARDENTLY GIVE ME THEIR SUPPORT...

A WISE DECISION, MY LORD.

I'VE DECIDED THEN. ONCE KONGMING COMES BACK, WE SHALL START PLANNING OUR CAMPAIGN.


THUS, THE THREE BEGAN TO DISCUSS WHOM TO LEAVE BEHIND TO PROTECT JINGZHOU AND WHOM TO TAKE ALONG TO SHU


荊州城
KONGMING WOULD REMAIN IN JINGZHOU,

關
GUAN YU AT XIANGYANG,

ZHAO ZILONG
AT JIANGLING
AND ZHANG FEI
WOULD
PROTECT THE
4 COMMANDER-
IES ALONG THE
RIVER.
AS FOR THE SHU
CAMPAIGN, LIU BEI
LED AN ARMY OF
50,000 AND
APPOINTED
PANG TONG AS THE
COMMANDER

THE YEAR WAS
212 A.D. WHEN
LIU BEI HEADED
FOR SHU.

HM?
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HE IS MY FRIEND, MENG DA.
WHO'S THAT?

I THANK YOU KINDLY.

I, MENG DA, HAVE COME HERE UNDER MY LORD'S ORDERS TO ESCORT YOU.

YES.

PLEASE FOLLOW AFTER ME.

LIU BEI HAS CROSSED THE BORDERS?

WHAT!?

SPLENDID! I SHALL GO TO FUCHENG TO WELCOME HIM THEN!

THAT'S ENOUGH, HUANG QUAN!

MY LORD, TO GREET AN ARMY FROM A FOREIGN LAND YOU'VE NEVER BEEN TO AND LED BY A MAN YOU'VE NEVER EVEN MET IS TO GREET YOUR OWN DEATH!

I URGE YOU TO RECONSIDER, MY LORD!

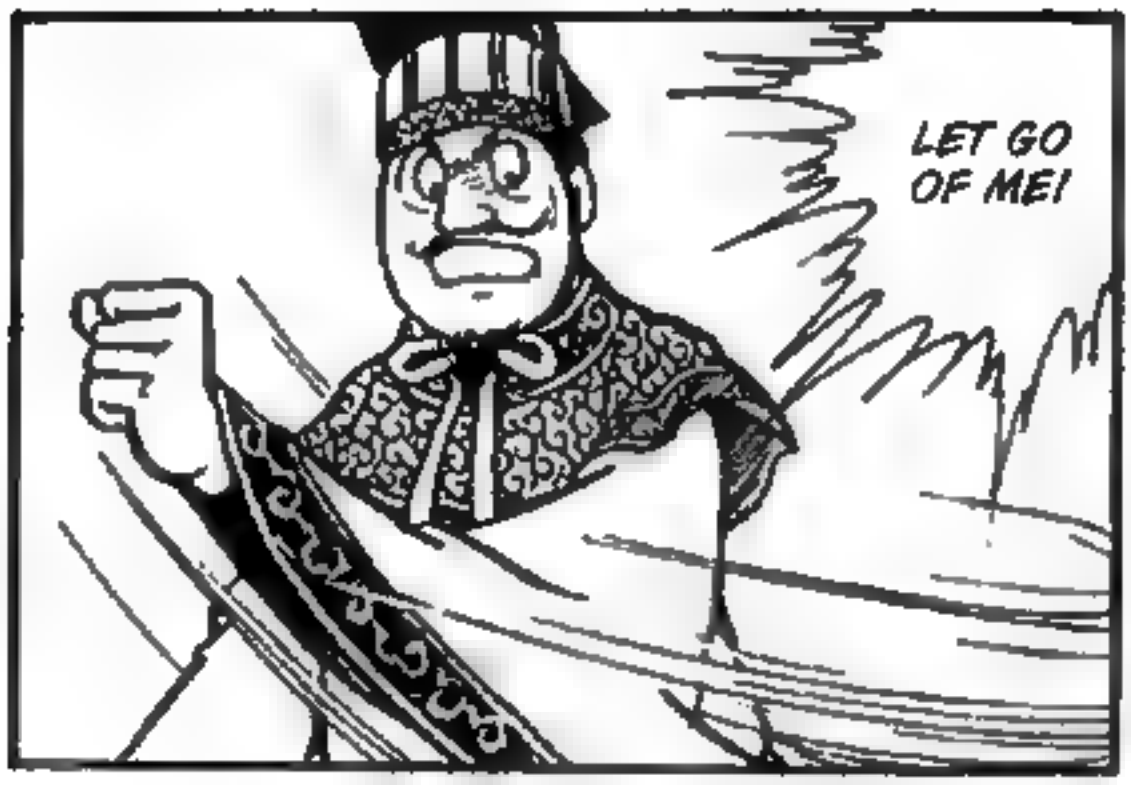
SILENCE! IF ANYONE HERE'S TRYING TO MANIPULATE OUR LORD, IT IS YOU!

LIU BEI WAS KIND ENOUGH TO RESPOND TO OUR LORD'S REQUEST FOR MILITARY AID AND YET YOU STILL TRY TO PIT OUR LORD AGAINST HIM?

THAT'S ENOUGH, HUANG QUAN! IT WOULD BE RUDE IF I DON'T WELCOME THE MAN I PURPOSELY CALLED.

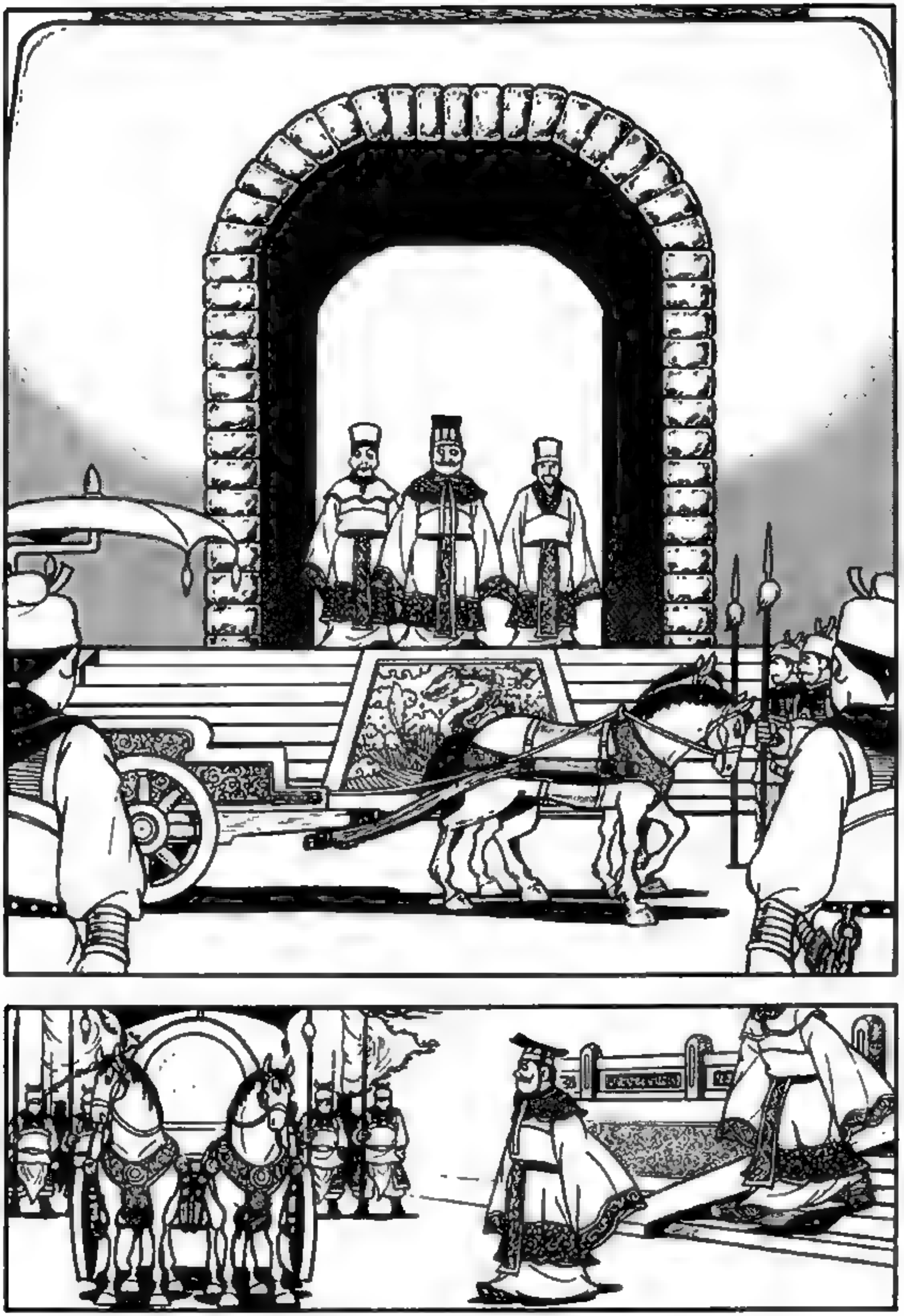
CEASE YOUR SLANDER! LIU BEI HAS MADE THE LONG JOURNEY TO SHU BECAUSE HE AND I ARE KIN!

YOU CANNOT THINK OF LIU BEI AS YOUR ALLY! HIS ARMY IS NOT TO PROTECT SHU, BUT TO STEAL IT!


LET GO OF ME!

LIU BEI CARES NOT THAT YOU ARE HIS RELATIVE! HE SHALL SURELY ROB YOU BLIND OF EVERYTHING!

MY LORD...



PLEASE WAIT, MY LORD!

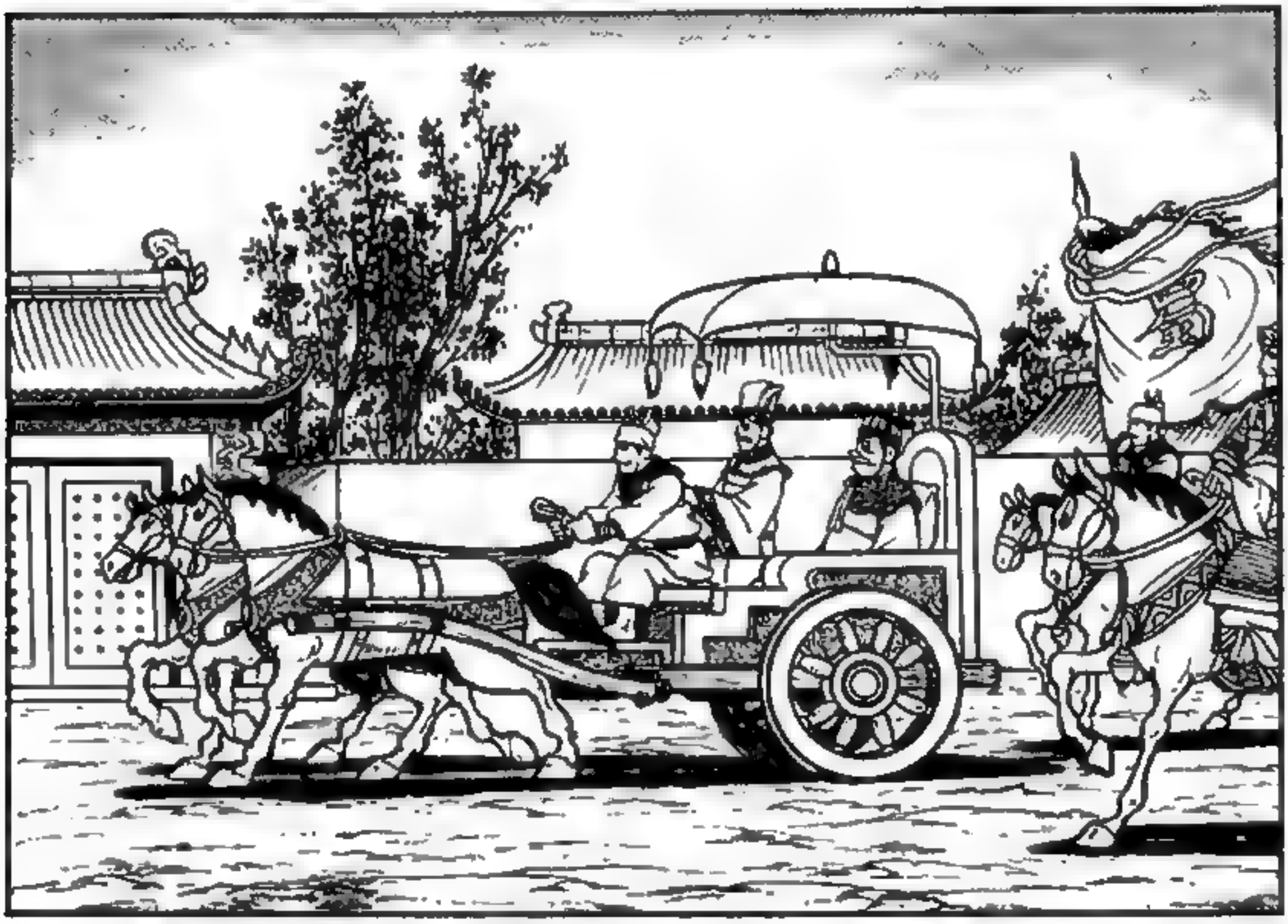
SO PLEASE HEED HUANG QUAN'S WORDS!

EFFECTIVE MEDICINE IS BITTER AND WISE ADVICE OFFENDS THE EAR. THUS, THERE IS NOTHING MORE VALUABLE THAN A LOYAL RETAINER BRAVE ENOUGH TO GIVE WISE ADVICE, NO MATTER HOW UNPLEASANT IT IS. AS THE ANCIENTS SAY, HAVING JUST 7 SUCH MEN IS ENOUGH TO PROTECT THE EMPIRE, 5 TO GUARD A KINGDOM, AND 3 TO SAVE A FIEF.

SILENCE! I'VE MADE MY DECISION ALREADY!

LET US BE OFF TO FUCHENG!

TAKE ME AWAY FROM HERE!



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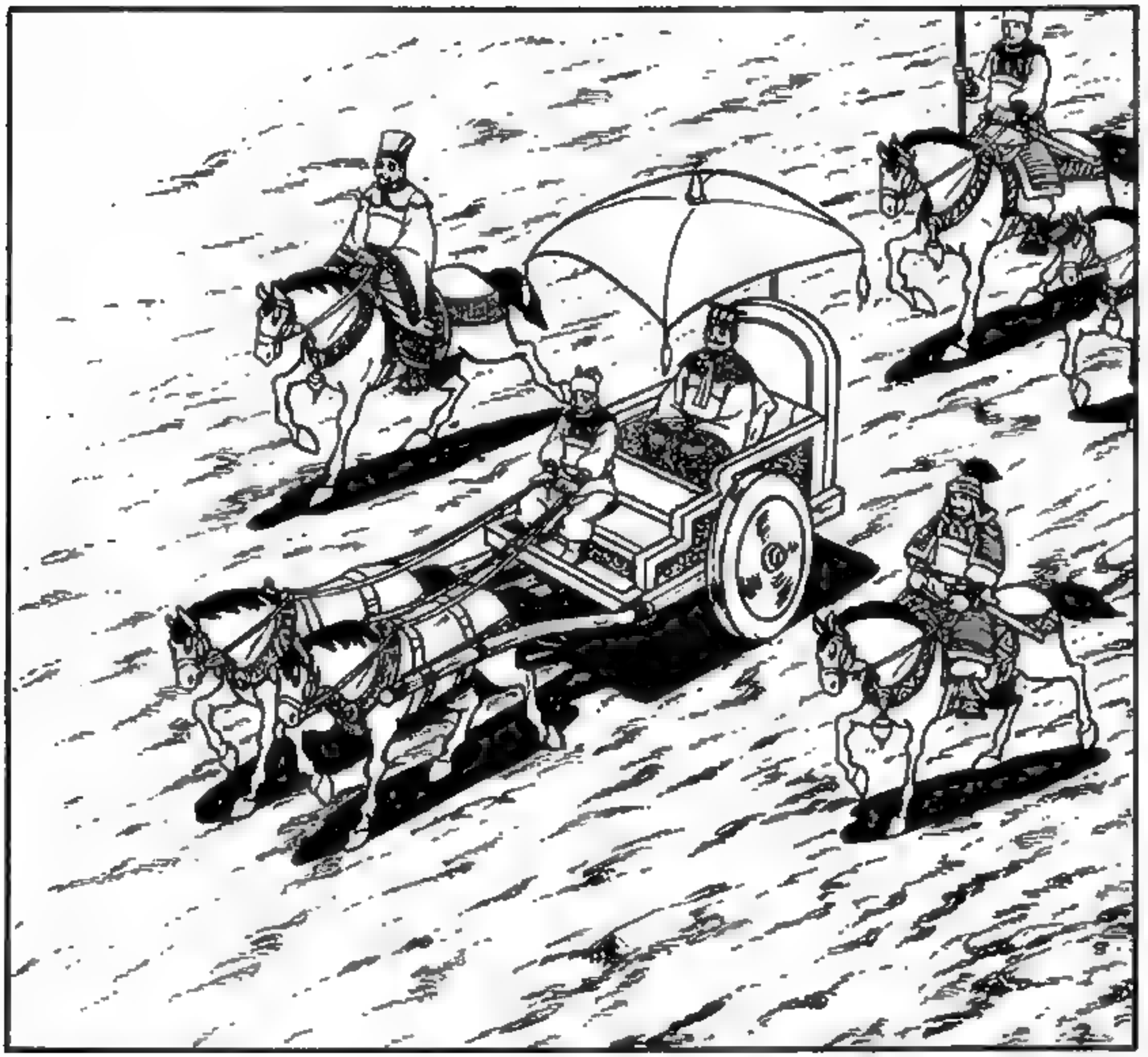
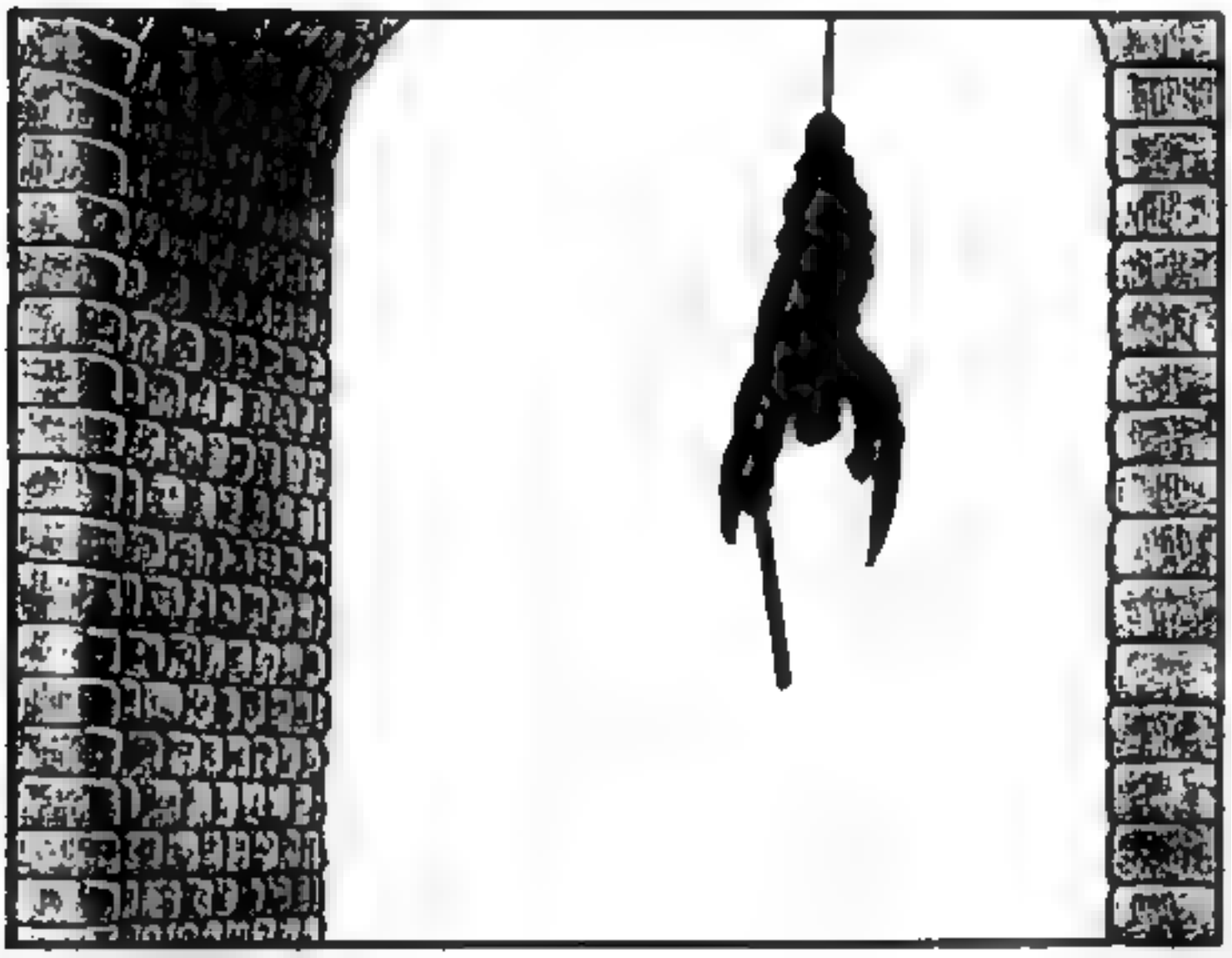




HM?

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS, WANG LEI!?

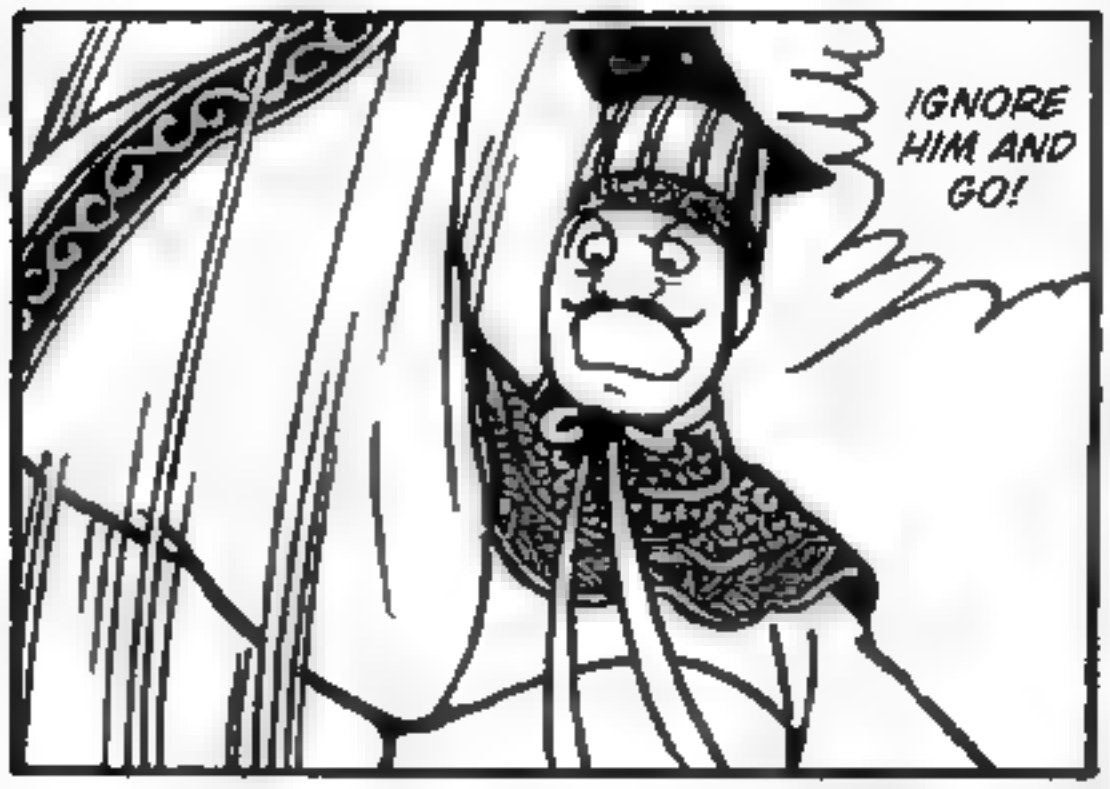
PLEASE WAIT, MY LORD!

IF YOU DO NOT HEED MY ADVICE AND TURN BACK, I WILL CUT THIS ROPE AND PLUMMET TO MY DEATH.

YOU DARE THREATEN ME, YOUR LORD!?

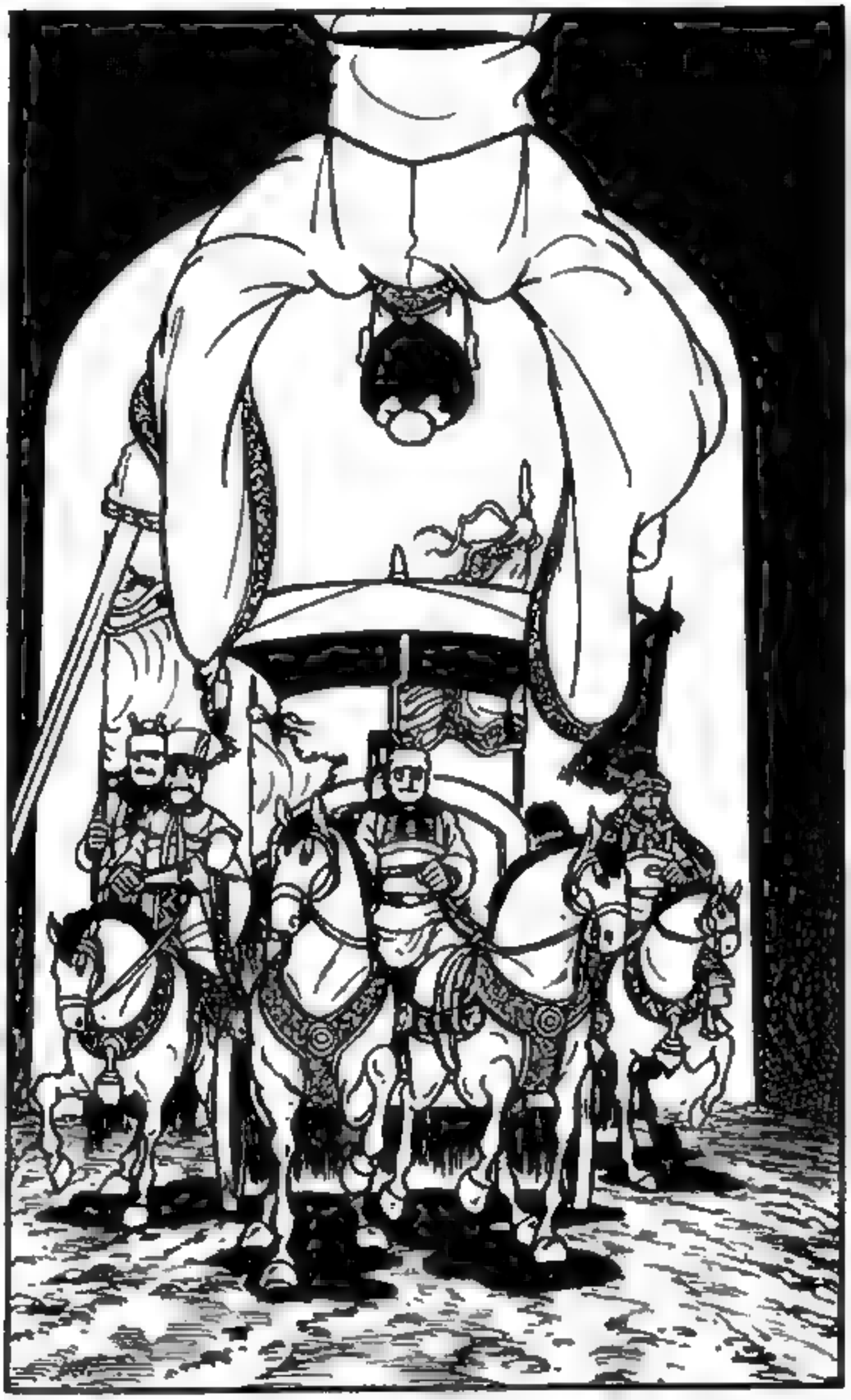
RIGHT NOW, MY LORD IS DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO FOLLOWING KING HUAI'S FOOT-STEPS. GOING TO MEET LIU BEI IS TO WILLINGLY BECOME HIS CAPTIVE. I URGE MY LORD TO BEHEAD ZHANG SONG HERE ON THE SPOT AND TURN BACK.

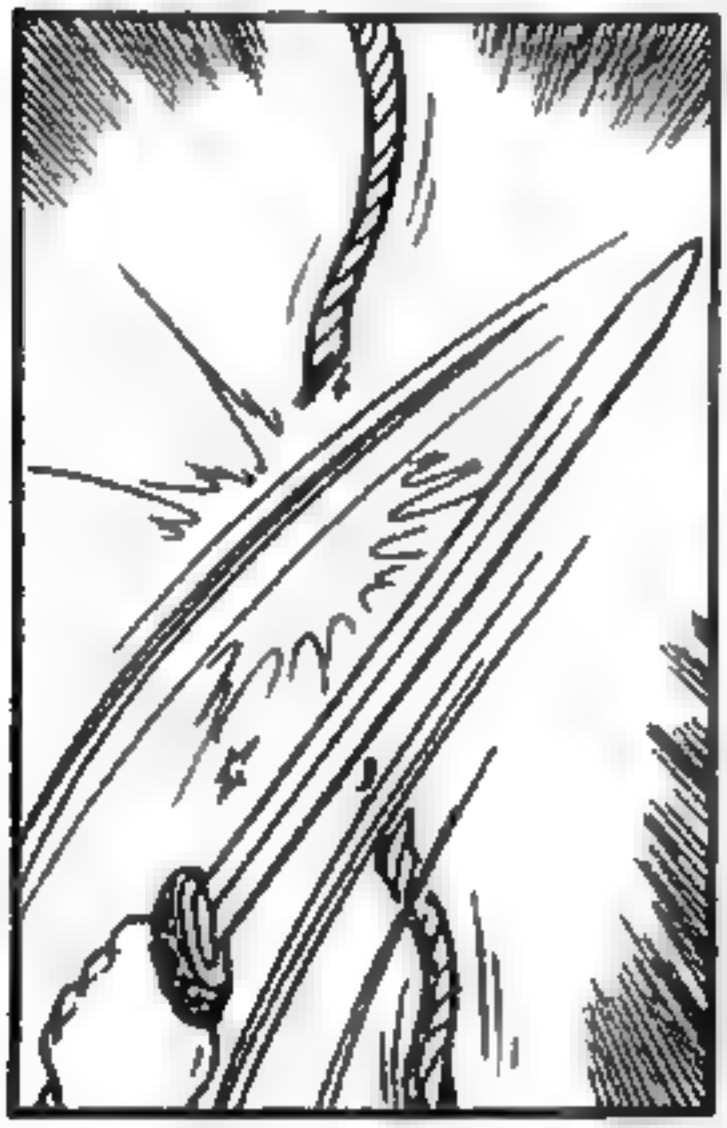
LONG AGO, KING HUAI OF CHU FAILED TO LISTEN TO QU YUAN'S ADVICE AND ATTENDED THE MEETING AT WU PASS, ONLY TO BE CAPTURED BY THE QIN.

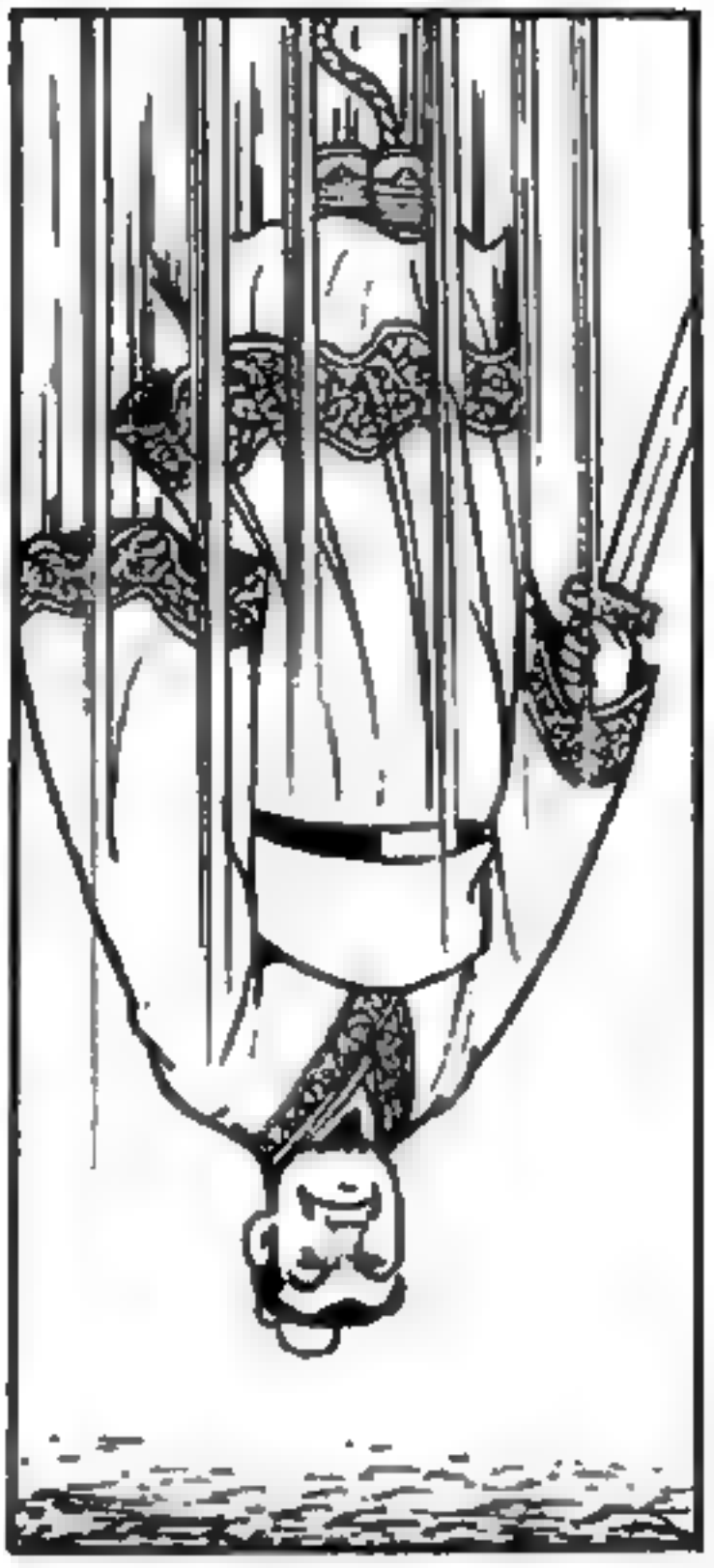

IGNORE HIM AND GO!

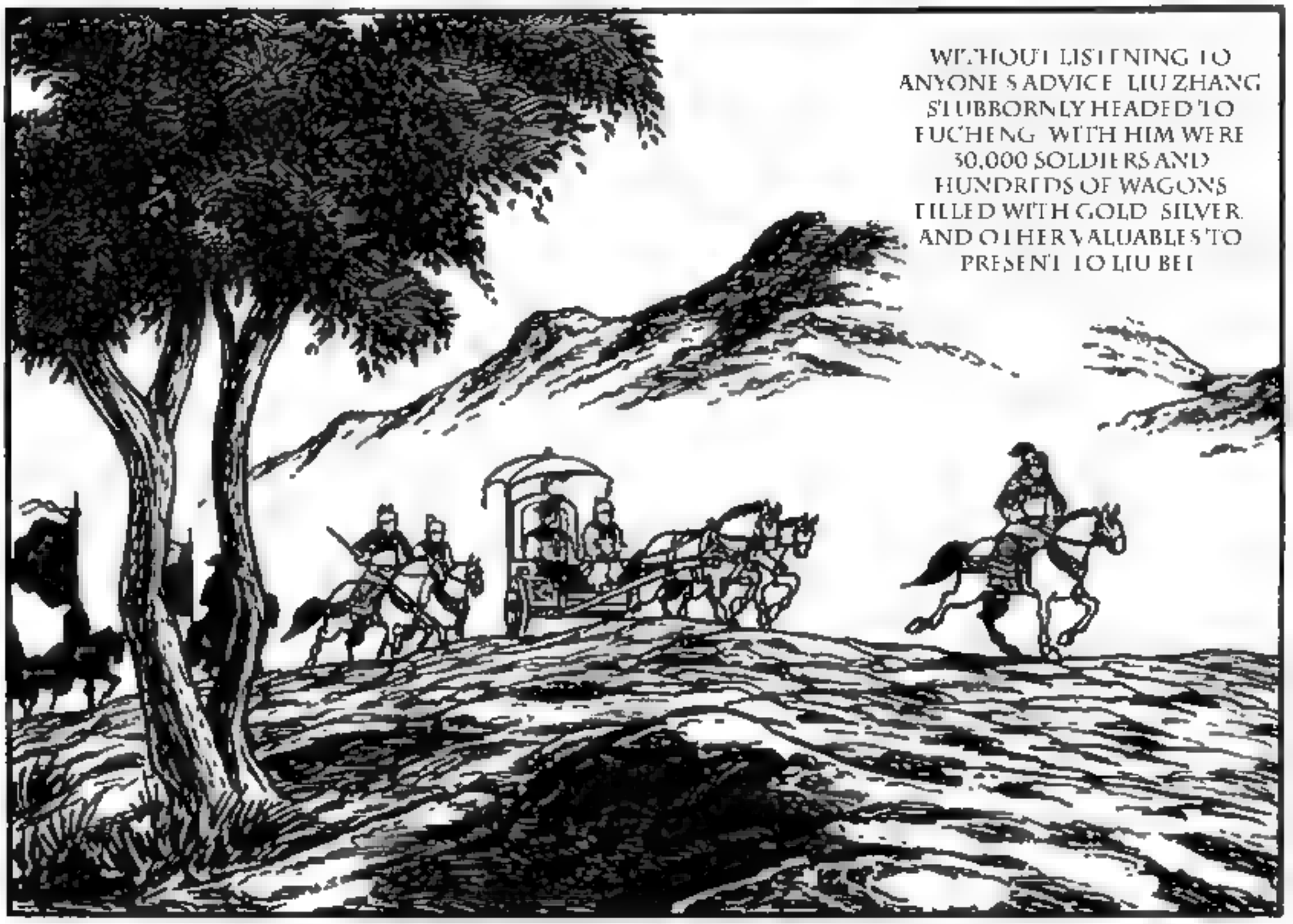
LIU BEI IS A MAN OF PRINCIPLES! I HAVE ALREADY DECIDED TO MEET HIM AND SIGN AN OATH OF BROTH-ERHOOD!

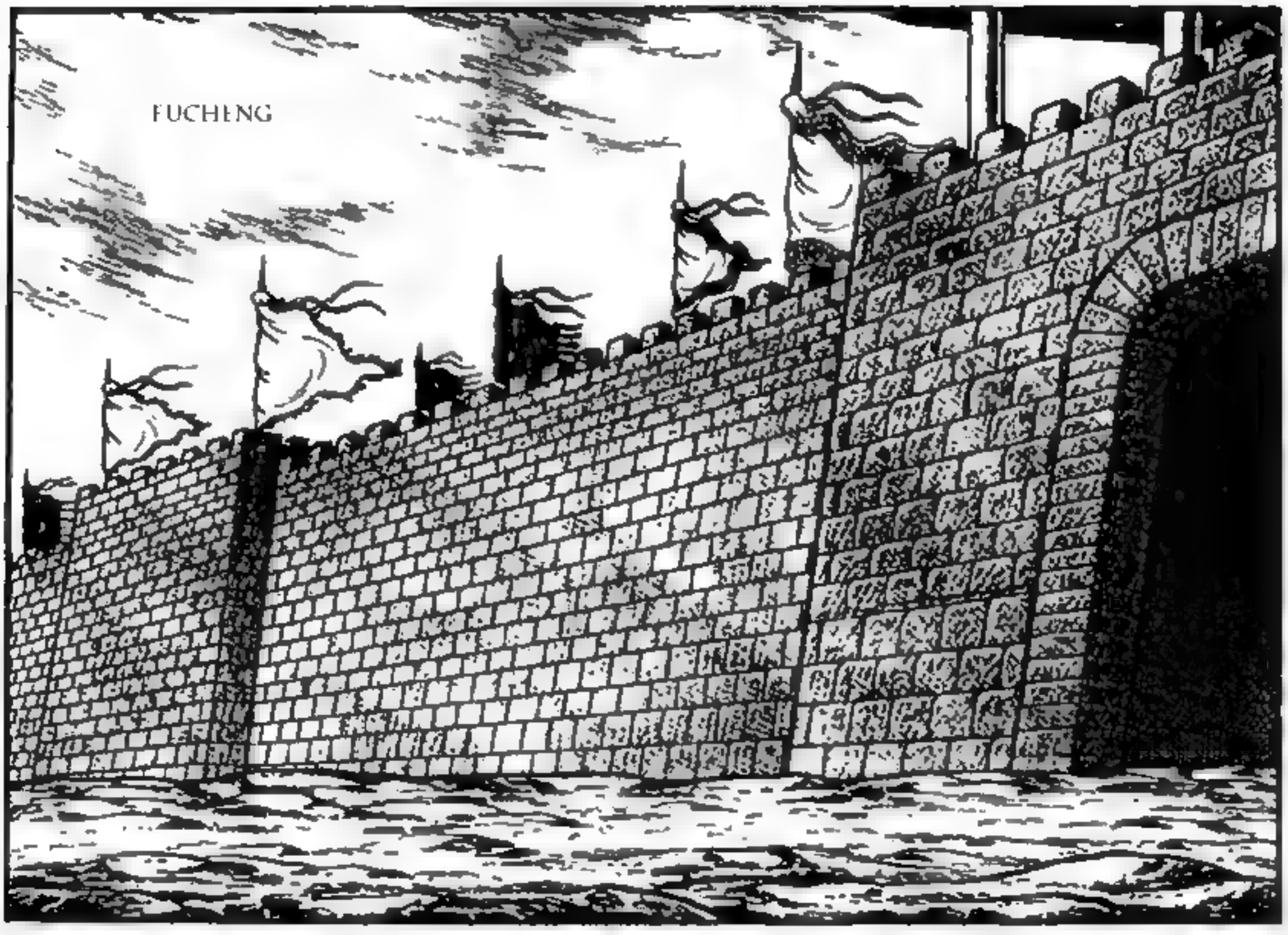
AND THUS SHU MEETS ITS END...

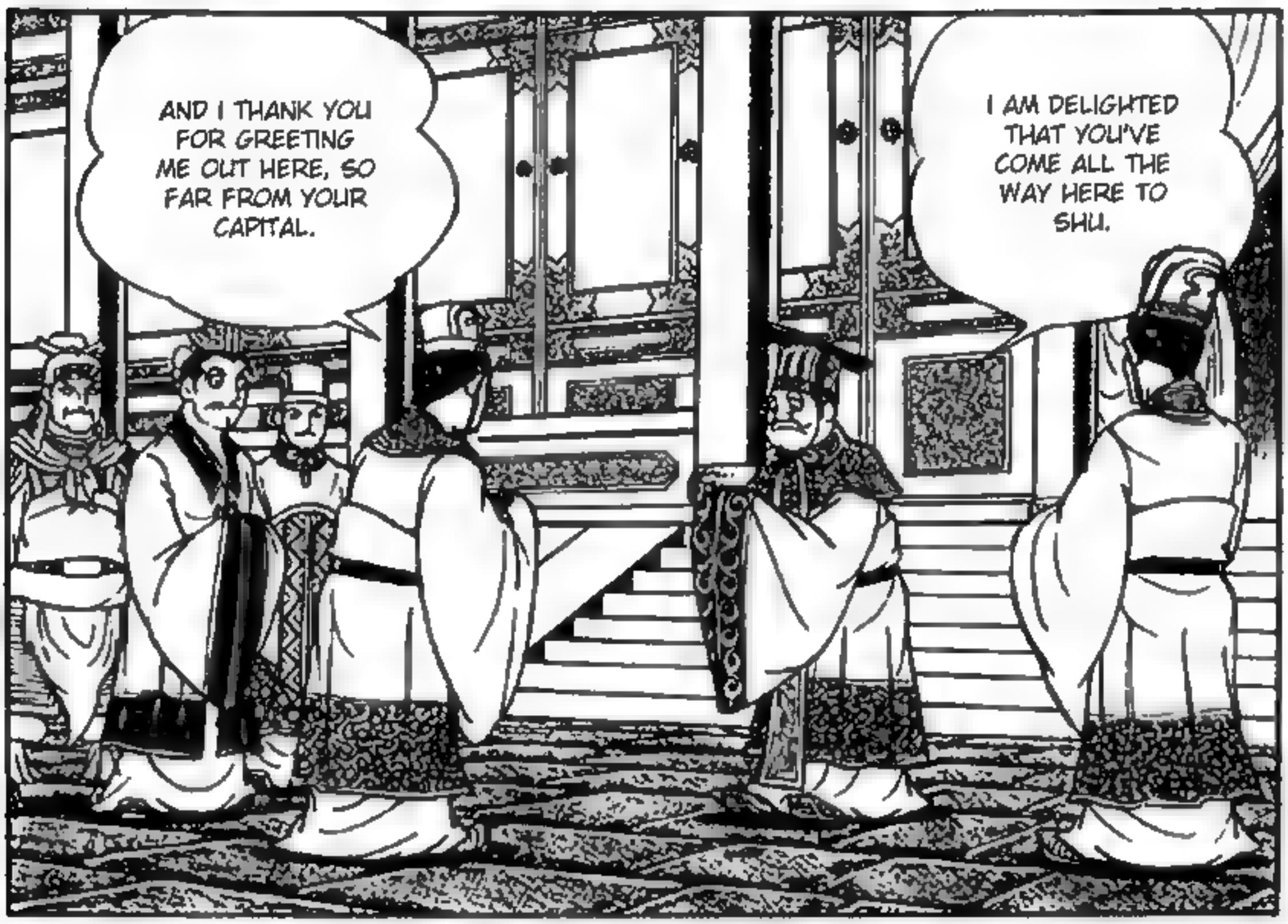


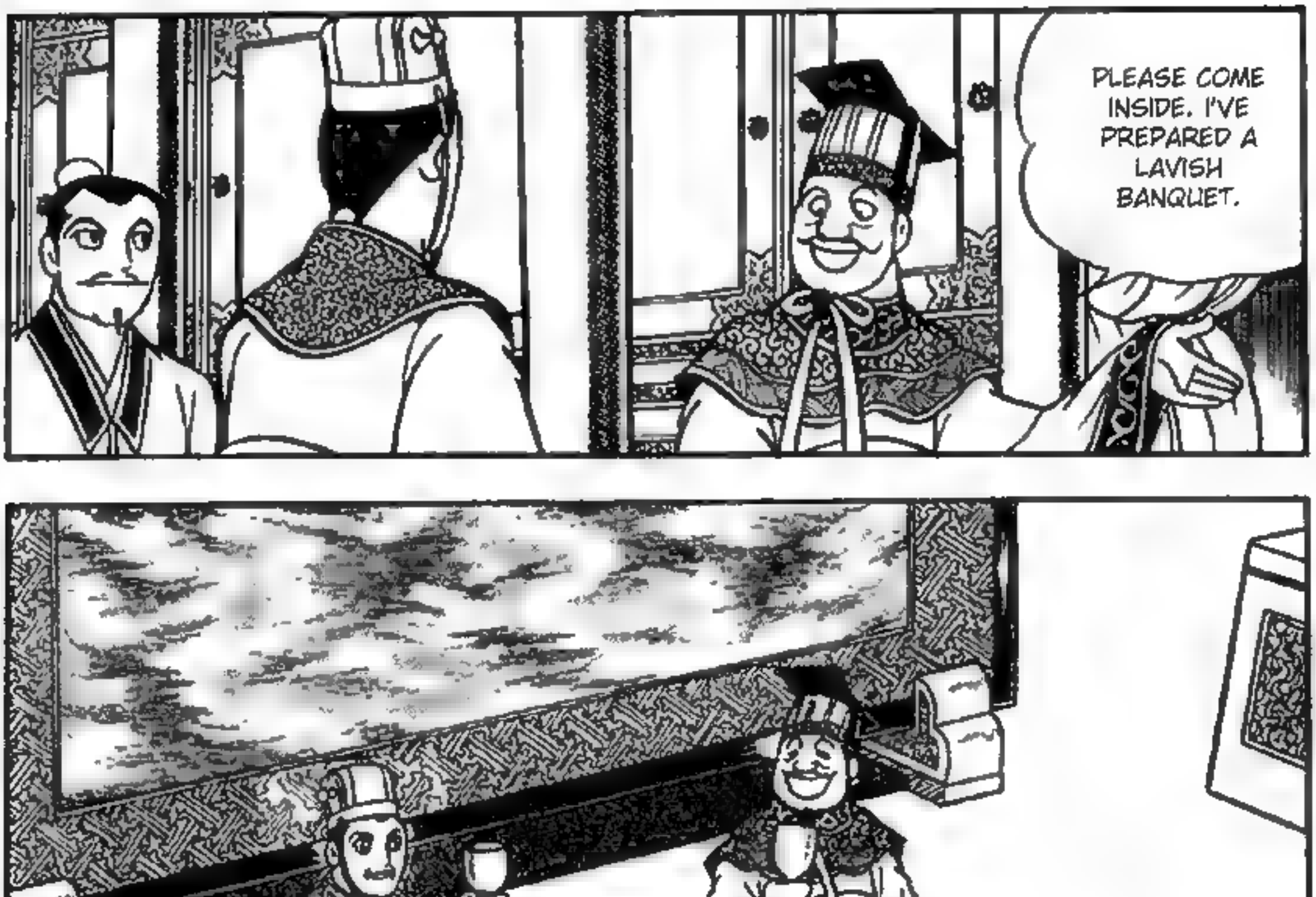




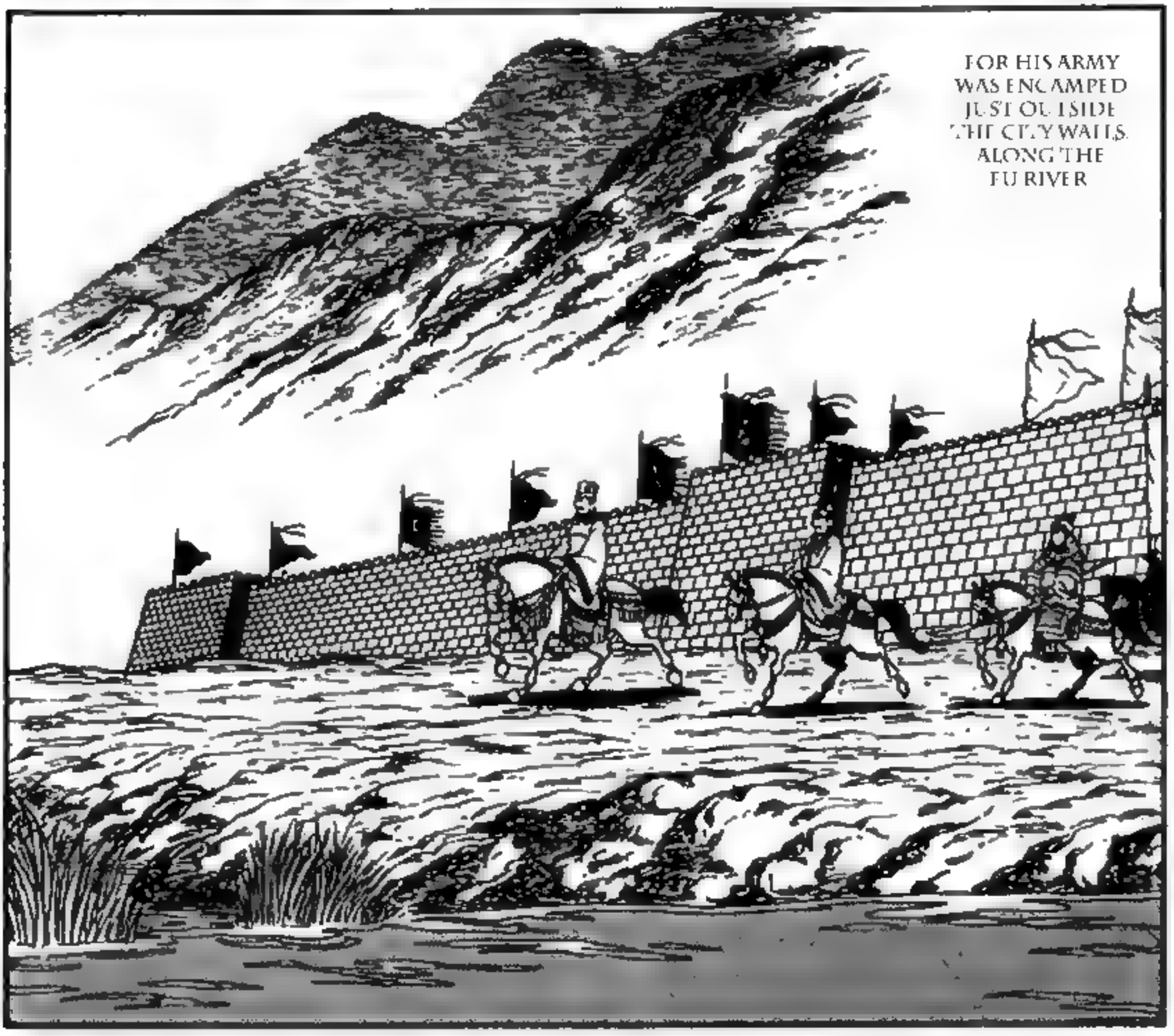

WITHOUT LISTENING TO
ANYONE S ADVICE LIU ZHANG
STUBBORNLY HEADED TO
FUCHENG WITH HIM WERE
30,000 SOLDIERS AND
HUNDREDS OF WAGONS
FILLED WITH GOLD SILVER
AND OTHER VALUABLES TO
PRESENT TO LIU BEI


FUCHENG


AND I THANK YOU FOR GREETING ME OUT HERE, SO FAR FROM YOUR CAPITAL.
I AM DELIGHTED THAT YOU'VE COME ALL THE WAY HERE TO SHU.


PLEASE COME INSIDE. I'VE PREPARED A LAVISH BANQUET.

AFTER THE BANQUET LIU BEI EXCUSED HIMSELF AND LEFT THE CITY.


FOR HIS ARMY WAS ENCAMPED JUST OUTSIDE THE CITY WALLS, ALONG THE FU RIVER

WE NO LONGER NEED TO FEAR THE LIKES OF ZHANG LU OR EVEN CAO CAO!

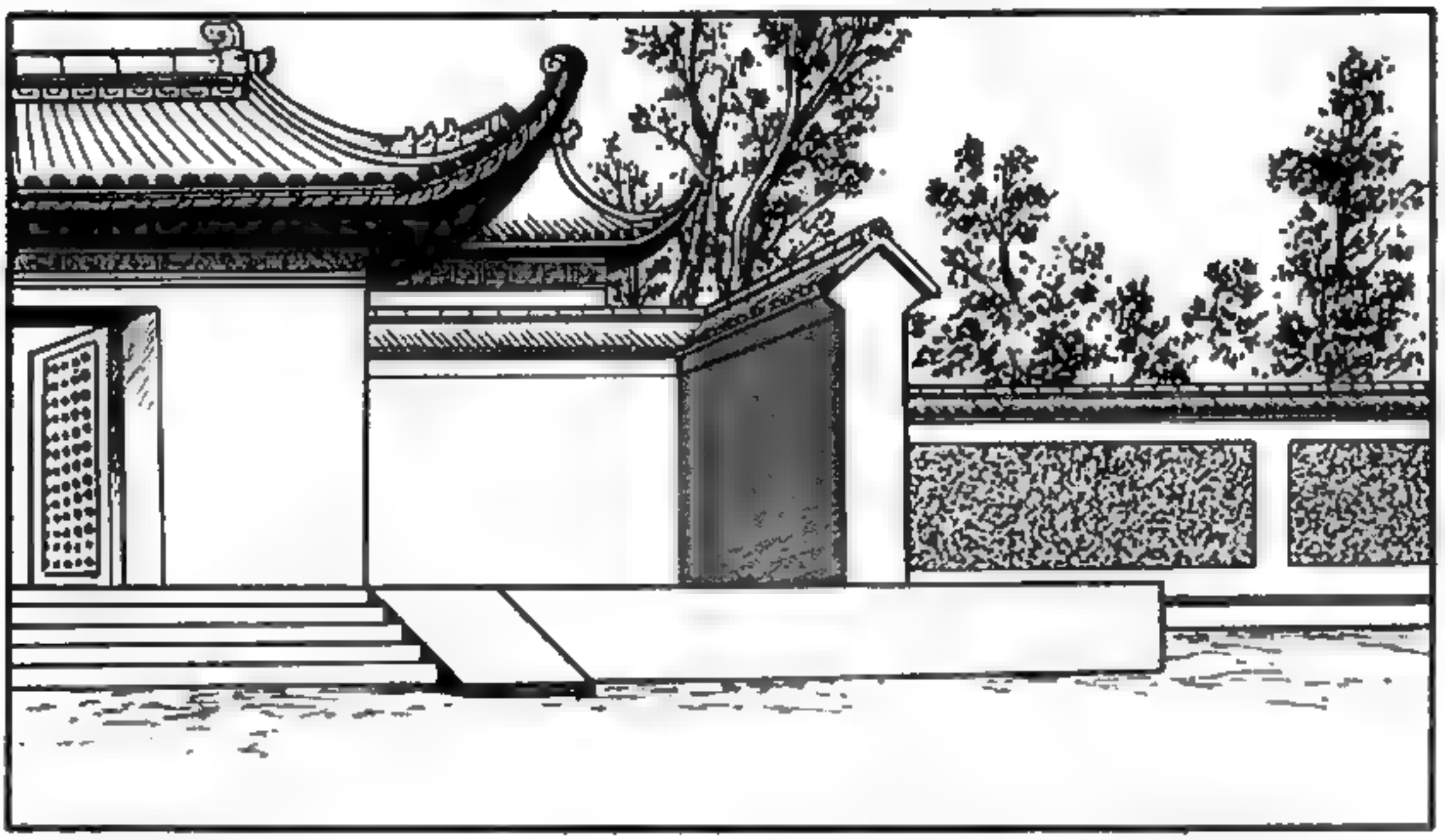
SEE, WHAT DID I TELL YOU? HE'S AS KIND AND RESPECTABLE AS THE RUMOURS SAY!

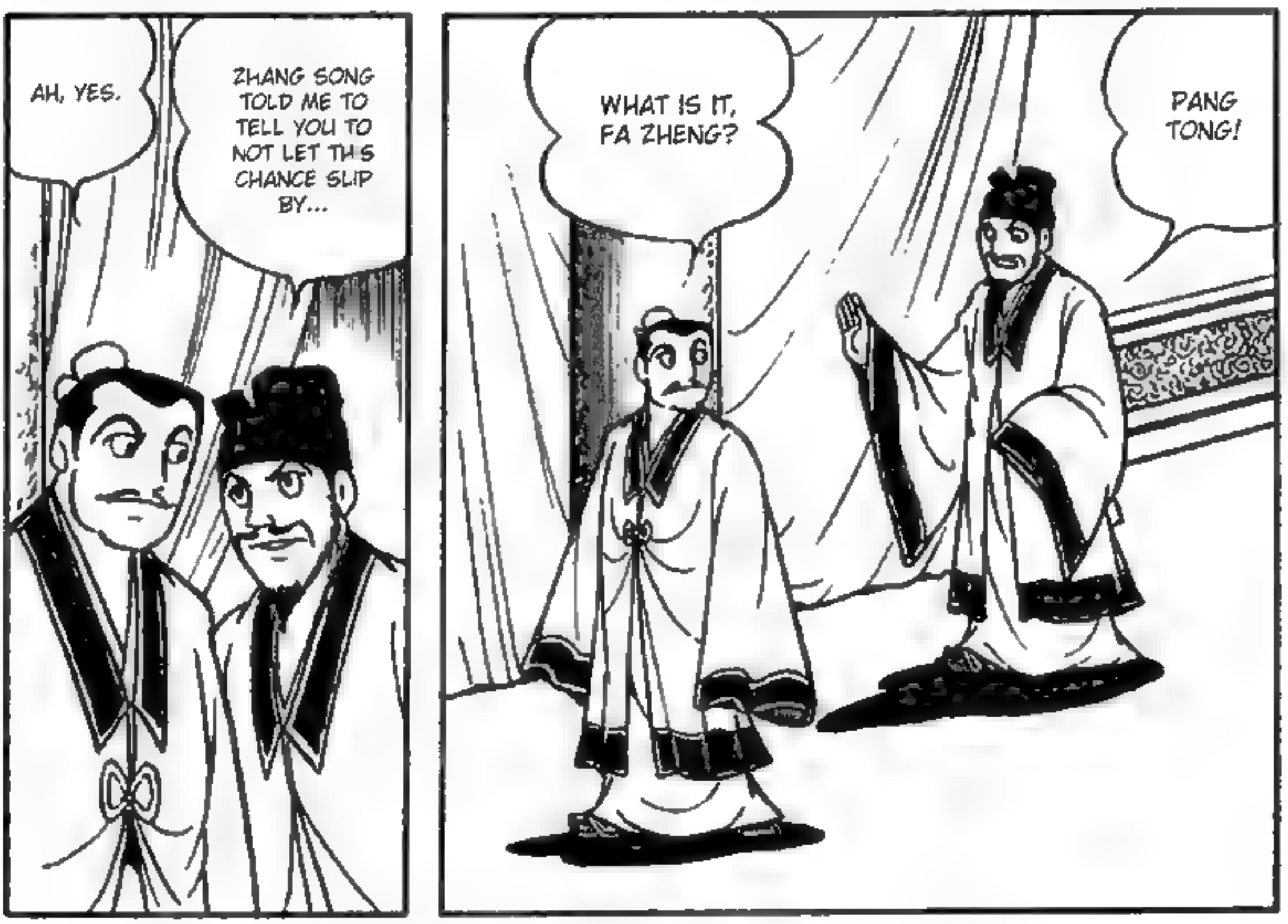
MY FEELINGS EXACTLY. LIU BEI'S PARADOXICALLY A MILD-MANNERED BUT BOLD LEADER. DISCERNING HIS TRUE INTENTIONS WILL NOT BE EASY.

LOOKS CAN BE DECEIVING, MY LORD. IT WOULD BE WISE TO NOT JUDGE LIU BEI SO QUICKLY.

HAHAHA! YOU'LL NEVER GET ANYWHERE IN THIS WORLD BY DISTRUSTING OTHERS SO MUCH!

SWORD DANCE




AH, YES.
ZHANG SONG TOLD ME TO TELL YOU TO NOT LET THIS CHANCE SLIP BY...
WHAT IS IT, FA ZHENG?
PANG TONG!

ZHANG SONG HAS SENT A LETTER ADVISING US NOT TO MISS THIS CHANCE.

WHAT IS IT, FA ZHENG AND PANG TONG?

MY LORD.

INVITE LIU ZHANG TO A BANQUET UNDER THE PRETENSES OF THANKING HIM FOR HIS KIND WELCOME AND...

AND THESE ARE LIU ZHANG'S OWN MEN WHO ARE SUGGESTING THE IDEA!

MY LORD, THERE WILL BE NO OTHER CHANCE AS GOOD AS THIS ONE!

NO, I CANNOT ALLOW THAT!

WAS IT NOT TO BUILD HIS OWN STATE IN SHU?

MAY I ASK MY LORD WHY HE BOTHERED TO LEAD HIS OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS ACROSS STEEP MOUNTAINS AND NARROW RAVINES?

EVEN SO...

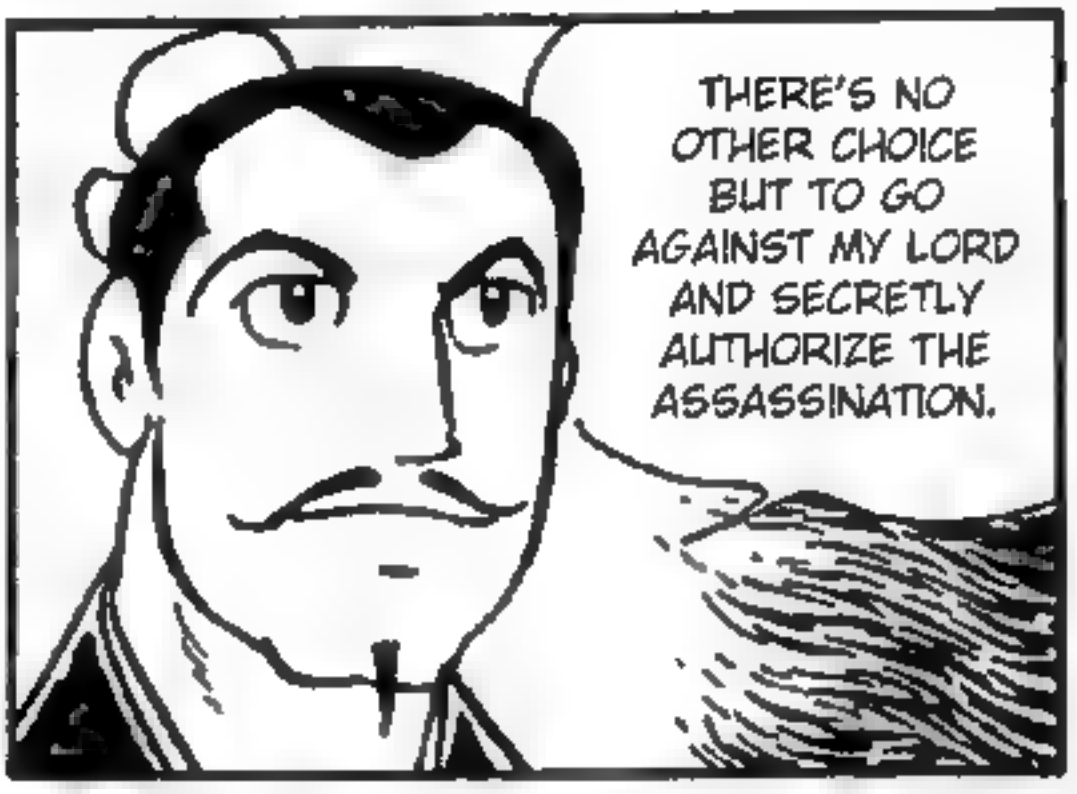
.....

I DID INDEED COME HERE TO CARVE OUT MY OWN TERRITORY. HOWEVER, I'VE ONLY JUST ARRIVED AND MUCH OF THE POPULACE IN SHU BARELY KNOWS ME, LET ALONE RESPECTS ME. KILLING LIU ZHANG NOW WOULD ONLY MAKE THEM DISTRUST ME, FUELLING FUTURE UNREST AND REBELLION.

.....

HMM...
WHAT SHOULD WE DO NOW, PANG TONG? IF LIU ZHANG RETURNS TO THE CHENGDU, THINGS WILL BECOME QUITE COMPLICATED.

I'LL HAVE WEI YAN DO IT DURING THE BANQUET TOMORROW.


THERE'S NO OTHER CHOICE BUT TO GO AGAINST MY LORD AND SECRETLY AUTHORIZE THE ASSASSINATION.

I PRAY IT SUCCEEDS.

THE DAY AFTER...

LIU BEI INVITED LIU ZHANG TO A BANQUET OF HIS OWN.

劉

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劉

YES, SIR.

AT MY SIGNAL, YOU ARE TO QUICKLY SLAY LIU ZHANG.

LET US JOIN HANDS AND FIGHT TOGETHER FOR OUR ENDANGERED EMPIRE.

HAHAHA! YOU KNOW, I HAVEN'T FELT THIS RELAXED FOR A LONG TIME. IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU THAT I NO LONGER LOSE SLEEP OVER ZHANG LU.

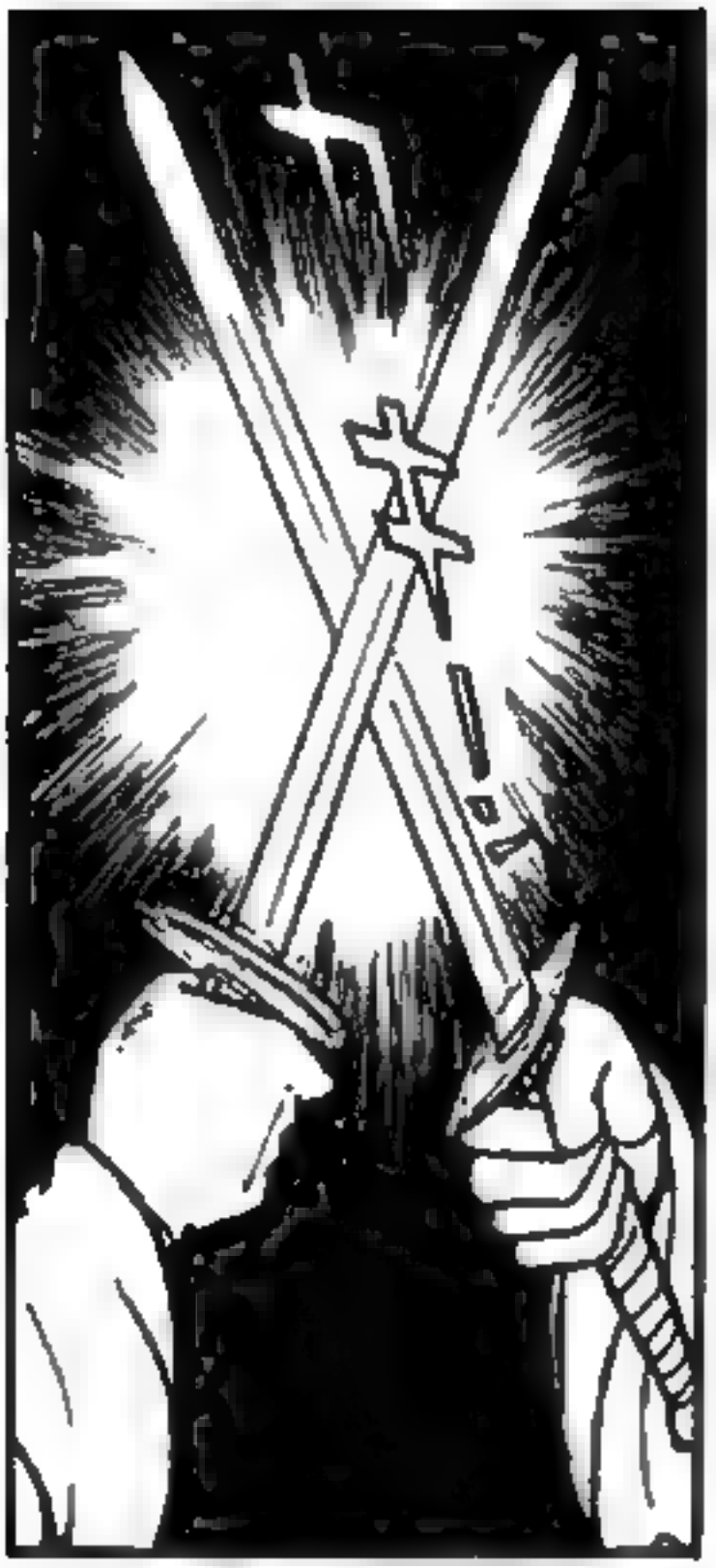
?

AND SO, I WISH TO ENTERTAIN YOU WITH MY SWORD DANCE AT THE VERY LEAST.

I APOLOGIZE TO THE LORD OF SHU FOR THE LACK OF DANCING GIRLS OR OTHER SUCH ENTERTAINMENT AT THE BANQUET TONIGHT.

YES, SIR.
DON'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN. IF HE TRIES TO HARM OUR LORD, KILL LIU BEI ON THE SPOT.

A PROPER SWORD DANCE REQUIRES A PARTNER. ALLOW ME TO BE YOUR PARTNER TONIGHT!



CONSIDER YOUR LORD'S LIFE FORFEIT IF YOU DARE HARM MY LORD...!

THAT LOOKS QUITE FUN. ALLOW ME TO JOIN TOO.

HOW DELIGHTFUL!

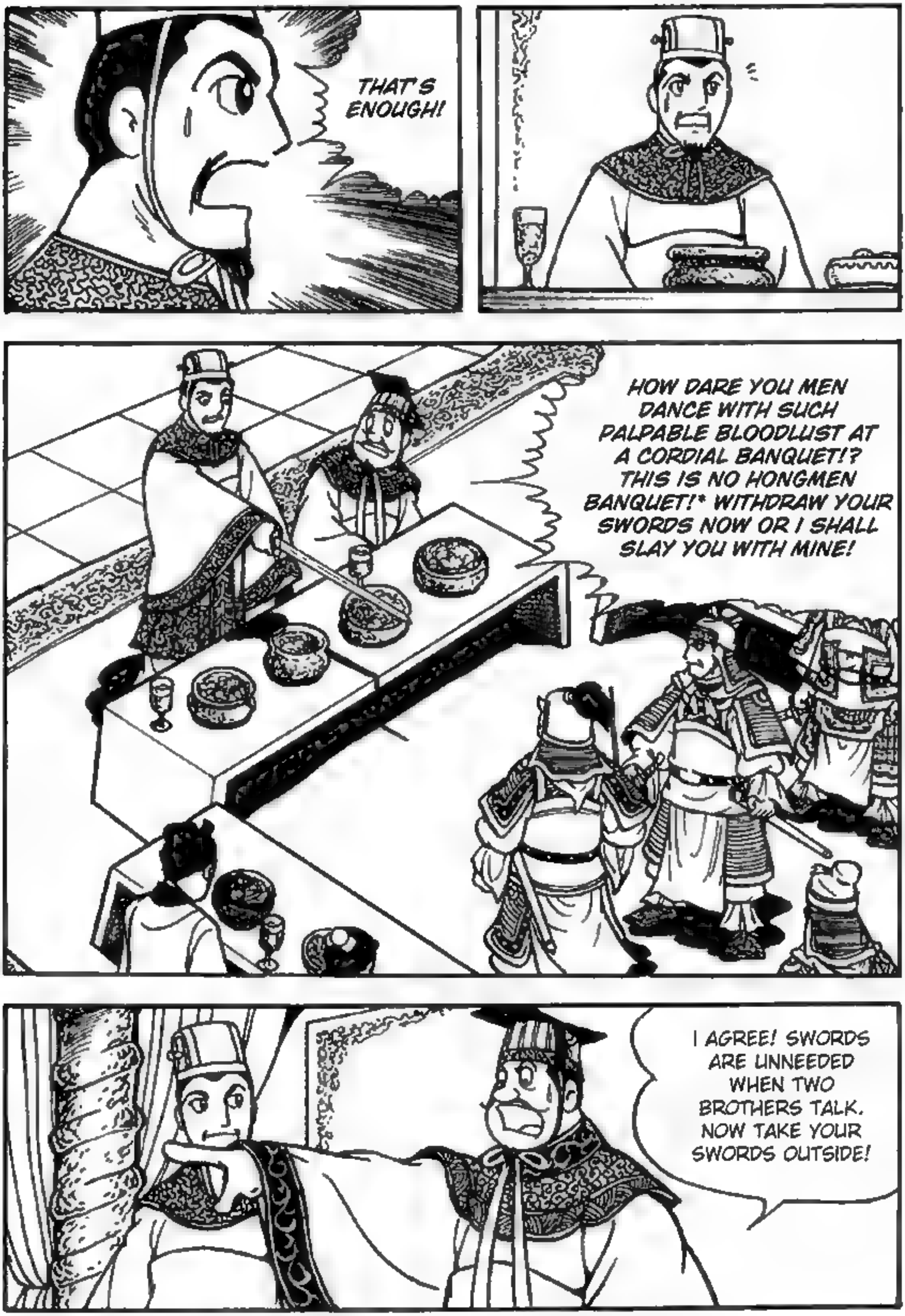
LET US JOIN TOO!

I COULD REALLY GO FOR A DANCE RIGHT NOW TOO.

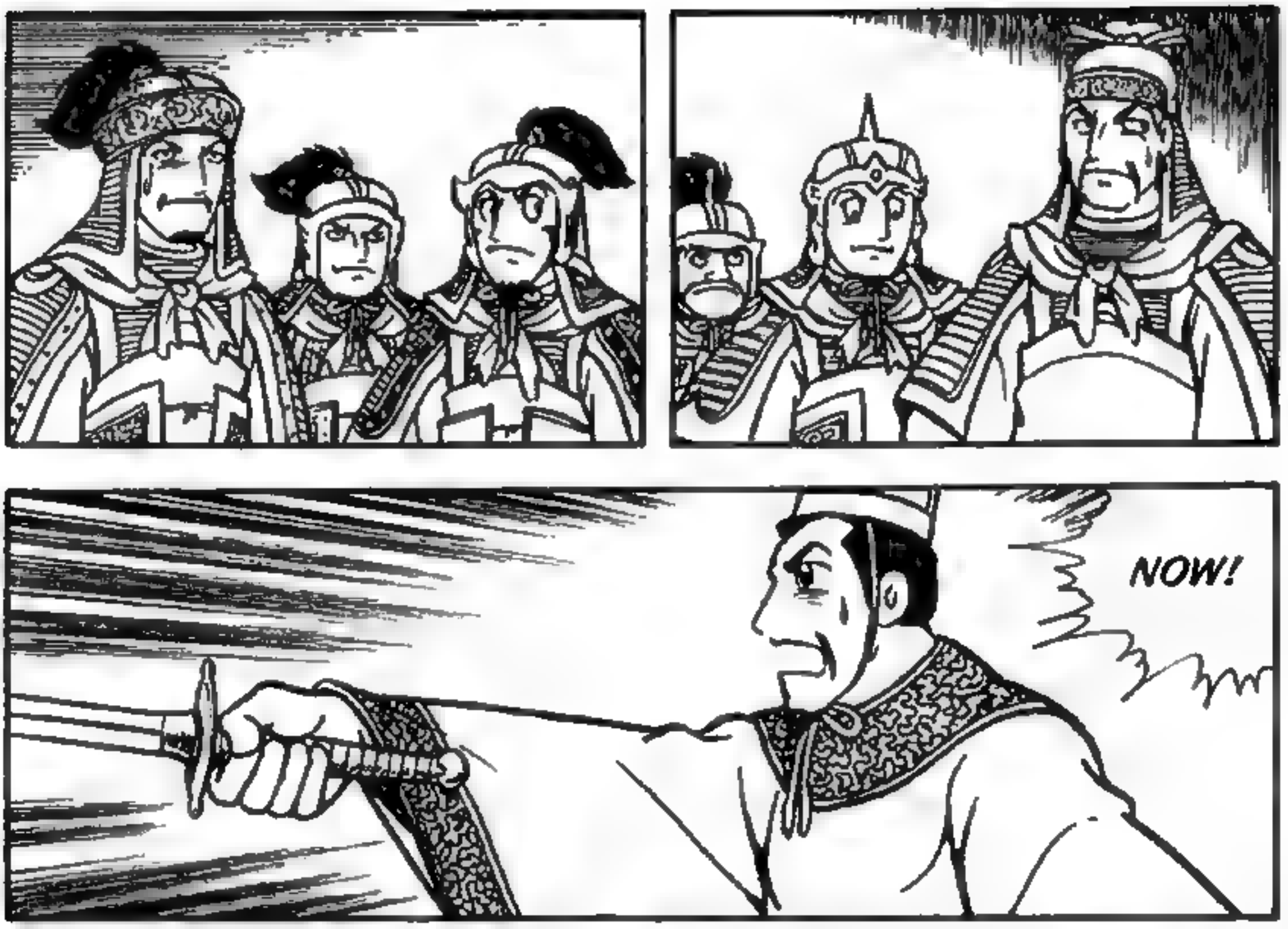
I'LL DANCE AS WELL!

ANY ROOM FOR ME?

MAKE ROOM!


THAT'S ENOUGH!
HOW DARE YOU MEN DANCE WITH SUCH PALPABLE BLOODLUST AT A CORDIAL BANQUET!? THIS IS NO HONGMEN BANQUET!* WITHDRAW YOUR SWORDS NOW OR I SHALL SLAY YOU WITH MINE!
I AGREE! SWORDS ARE UNNEEDED WHEN TWO BROTHERS TALK. NOW TAKE YOUR SWORDS OUTSIDE!

*HONGMENG BANQUET WHERE XIANG YU'S OFFICER ATTEMPTED TO ASSASSINATE LIU BANG (FOUNDER OF THE HAN DYNASTY) THROUGH A SWORD DANCE


NOW!

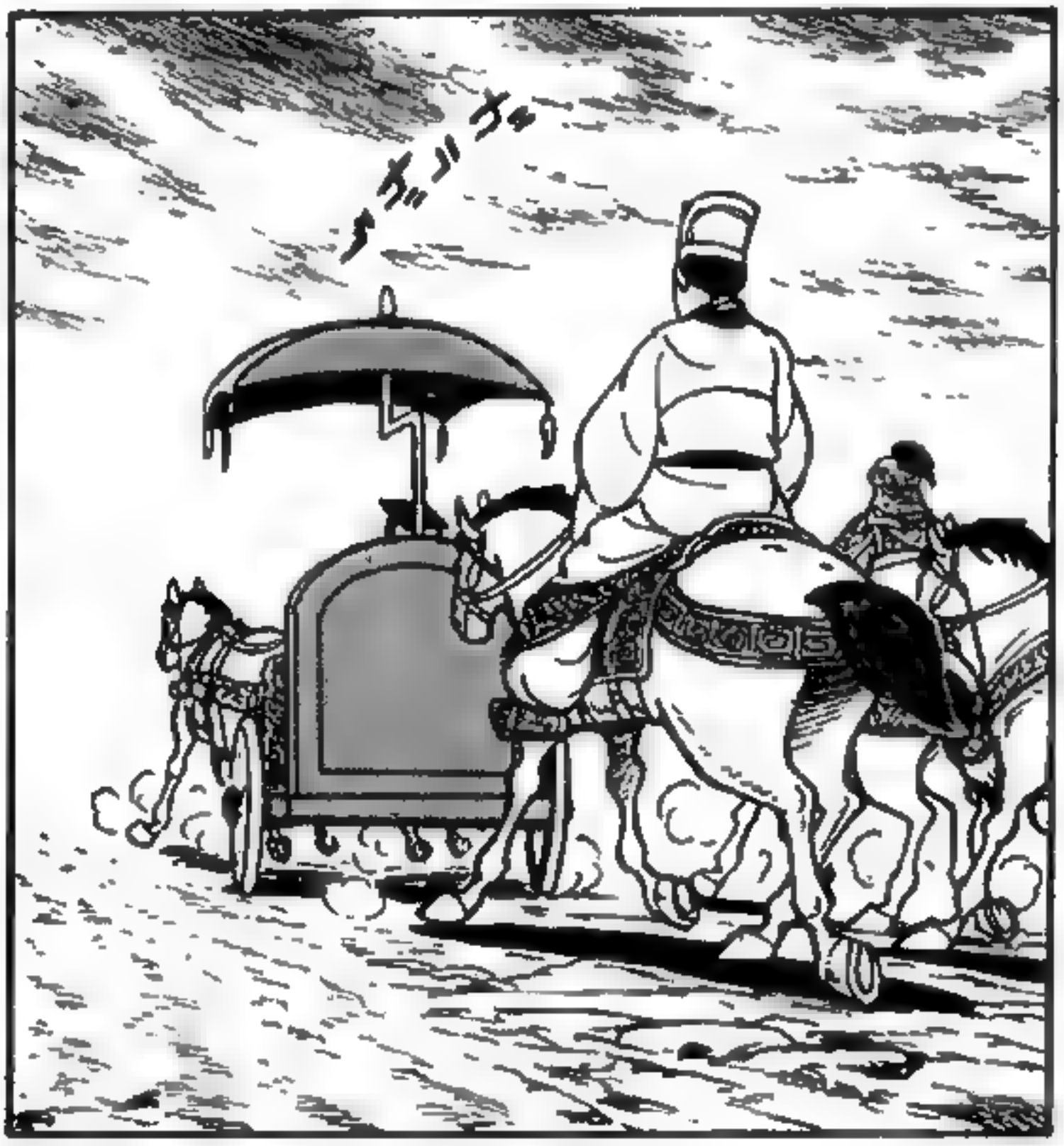
I WILL NOT ALLOW ANYONE TO CAUSE TROUBLE.

LIU ZHANG AND I ARE BROTHERS OF THE SAME BLOOD. WE ARE HERE TO COOPERATE FOR THE GOOD OF THE EMPIRE, NOT TO HARM EACH OTHER.

NOW I SHALL POUR A DRINK TO EACH OF YOU SO THROW AWAY ANY HARD FEELINGS.

NO, NO. I SHOULD APOLOGIZE TOO SINCE MY MEN ACTED THE SAME.
PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR THE IMPUDENCE OF MY OFFICERS.

THE BANQUET FINALLY ENDED LATE IN THE EVENING



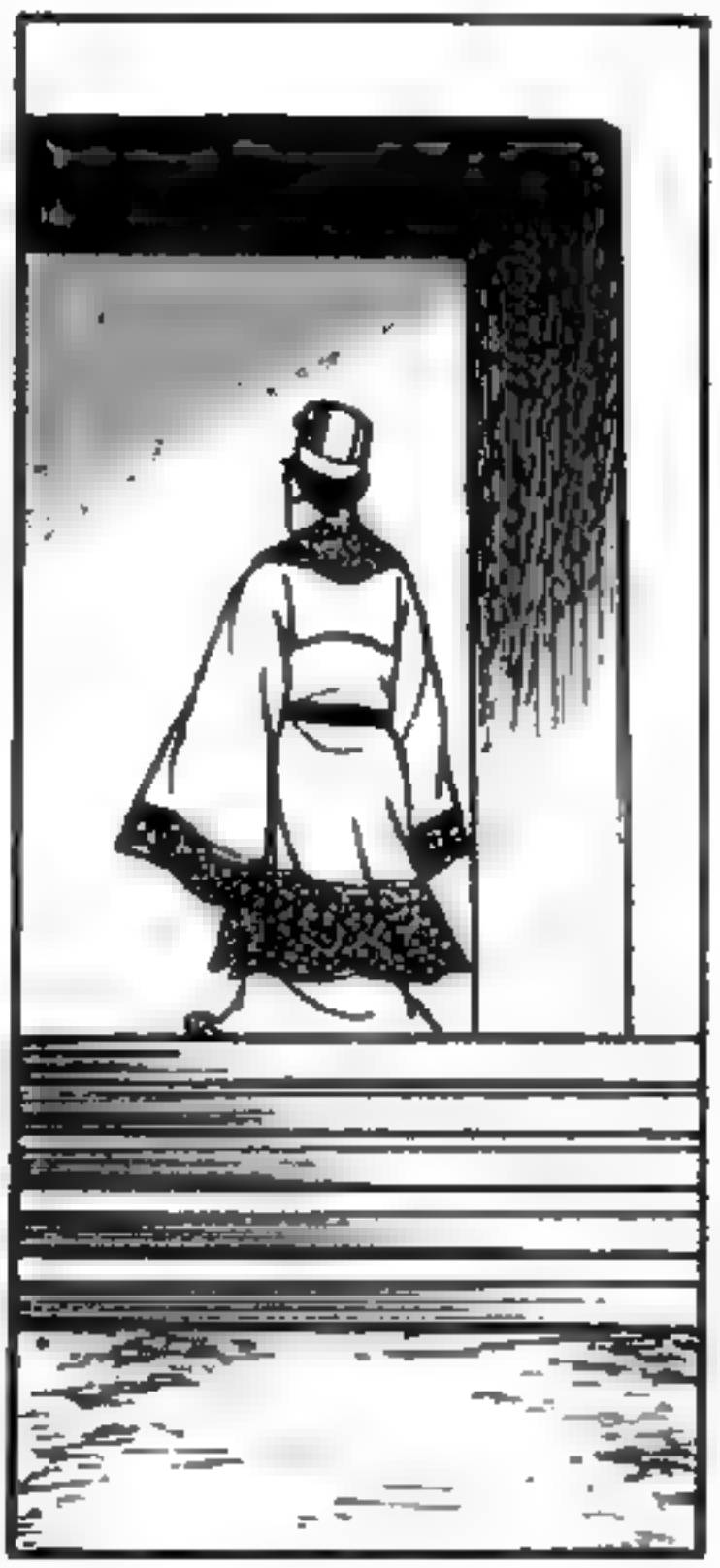
HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN YOURSELF!

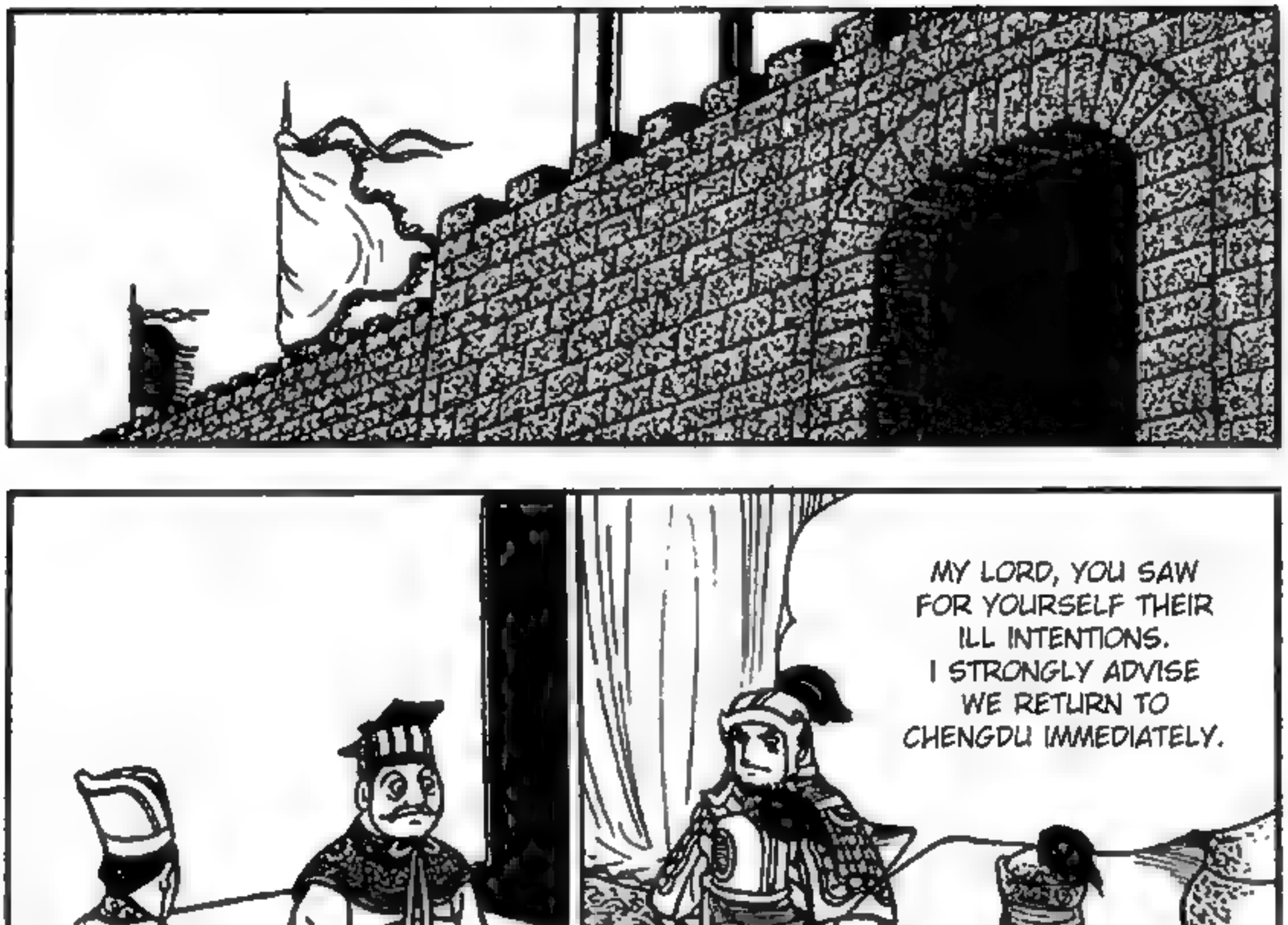
YES?
PANG TONG.

NEVER DO SUCH A THING AGAIN.

I EXPRESSLY DISPROVED THE PLAN, FOR I'VE YET TO EARN THE SHU PEOPLE'S HEARTS!

MY LORD INSISTS ON TAKING THE LONG WAY ONCE AGAIN...




MY LORD, YOU SAW FOR YOURSELF THEIR ILL INTENTIONS. I STRONGLY ADVISE WE RETURN TO CHENGDU IMMEDIATELY.

PERHAPS, BUT THE SAME CANNOT BE SAID OF HIS MEN.
NO, LIU BEI CLEARLY HAD NO INTENTION OF KILLING ME.

YOU MEN WORRY TOO MUCH. LIU BEI AND I ARE NOW BROTHERS SO DO NOT ATTEMPT TO TURN ME AGAINST HIM.

ENOUGH! I WILL NOT STAND FOR YOU SLANDERING MY BROTHER!

IT WILL BE TOO LATE TO DO ANYTHING ONCE HE TAKES OVER SHU, MY LORD!

.....

SHORTLY AFTER, IT WAS REPORTED THAT ZHANG LU HAD BEGUN HIS INVASION BY ATTACKING JIAMENG PASS.

SEE! WHILE YOU MEN CRY ABOUT LIU BEI, OUR REAL ENEMY ZHANG LU HAS LAUNCHED HIS ATTACK!

WHAT!? ZHANG LU HAS BEGUN HIS INVASION!?

YES, SIR.

INFORM LIU BEI AT ONCE!

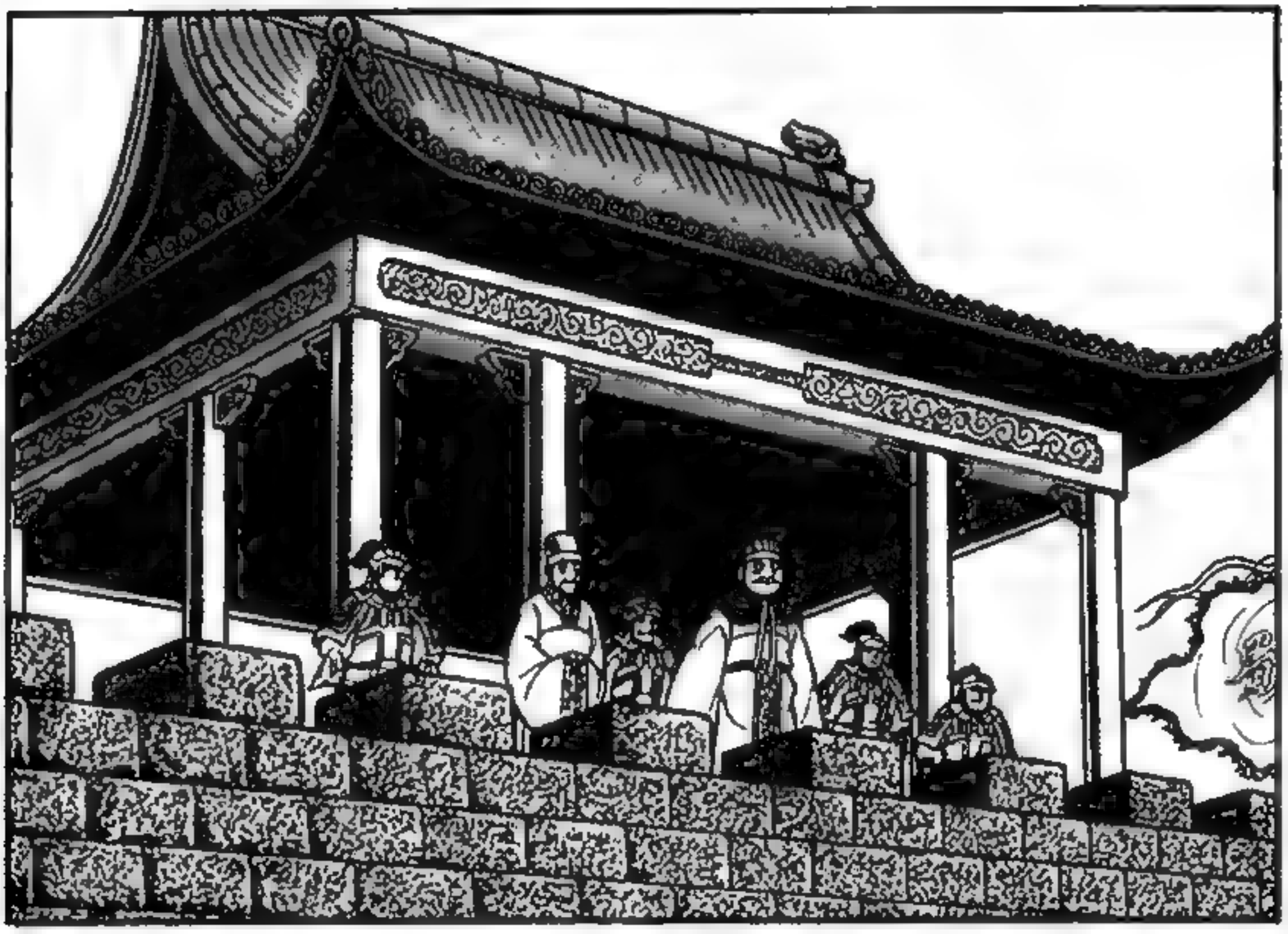
YES, SIR.

WHAT!? ZHANG LU HAS INVADED JIAMENG PASS!?

I UNDERSTAND. TELL HIM I WILL LEAVE AT ONCE.

MY LORD REQUESTS YOUR IMMEDIATE AID.

LIU BEI AND HIS
ARMY NOW
HEADED FOR
JIAMENG PASS.



MY LORD, WE SHOULD USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN SHU'S DEFENCES.

LOOK HOW DEPENDABLE THEY ARE!

YOU STILL DOUBT LIU BEI AS HE MARCHES FORTH TO PROTECT OUR LANDS!?

YES, WE MUST PREPARE FOR THE WORST-CASE-SCENARIO OF LIU BEI TURNING ON US.

FINE, FINE.

I AGREE! WE MUST PREPARE FOR ALL SCENARIOS.

LIU BEI'S MEN ARE STILL TOO UNPREDICTABLE!

SO WHAT EXACTLY MUST I DO?

FINE. I CAN DO THAT MUCH, I SUPPOSE.

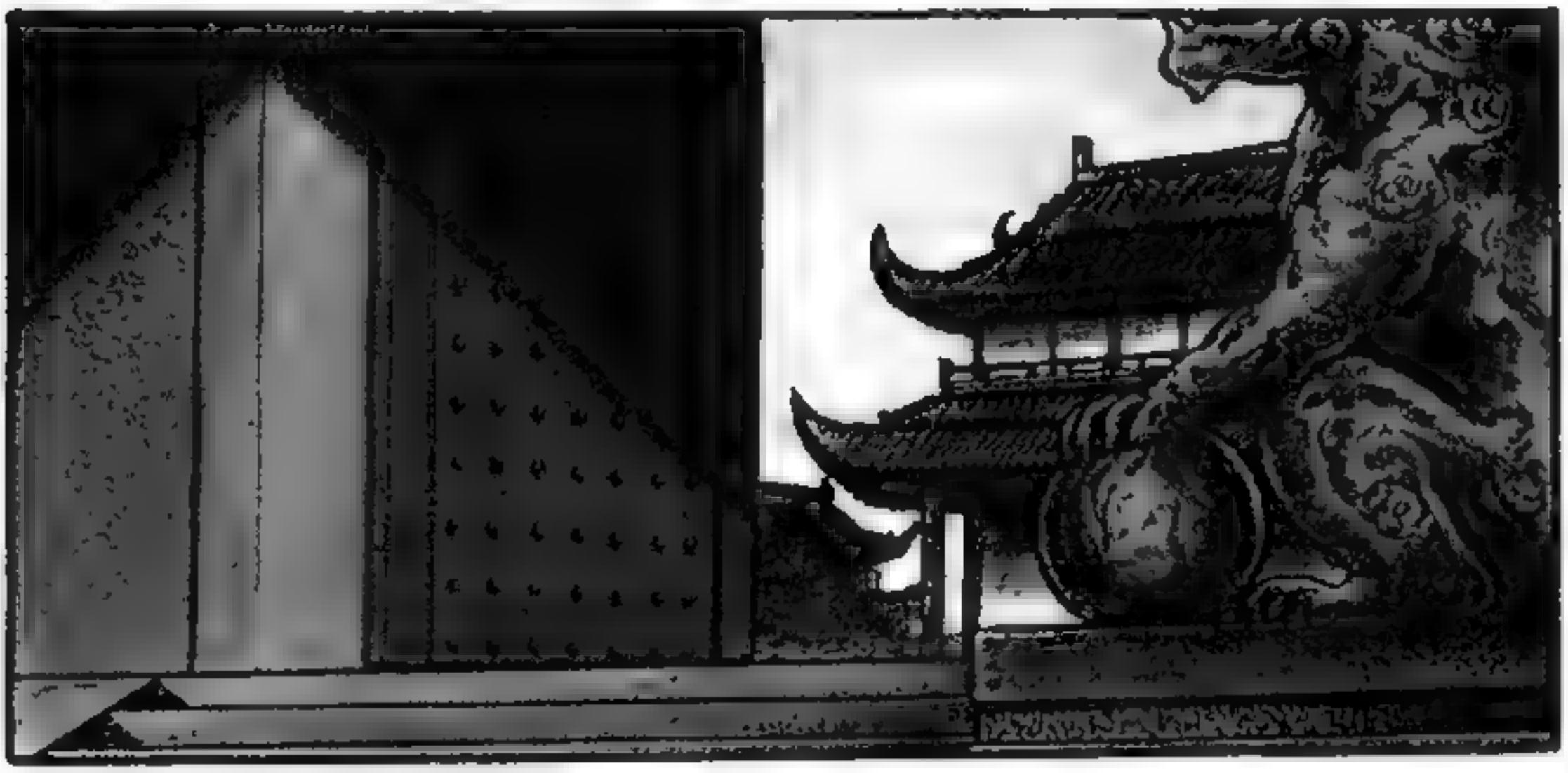
SEND YANG HUAI AND GAO PEI TO DEFEND THE FU RIVER PASS, WHILE MY LORD RETURNS TO CHENGDU.

YES, MY LORD.

SEND THE ORDERS TO YANG HUAI AND GAO PEI AT ONCE.

GIVING IN TO THE
PERSISTENCE OF HIS
RETAINERS, LIU ZHANG
RETURNED TO
CHENGDU AT LAST.

A MOST VALUABLE ASSET



ALTHOUGH NOT CERTAIN, REPORTS SAY THAT HE IS CURRENTLY IN THE MIDST OF A BLOODY BATTLE WITH ZHANG LU.

IT SEEMS LIU BEI HAS SHOWN HIS FANGS AT LAST AS HE SET HIS EYES ON SHU AND MARCHED THERE WITH AN ARMY. WHAT DO YOU MEN MAKE OF THIS TURN OF EVENTS?

YES, I WAS THINKING THE SAME.

SINCE HE TOOK AROUND HALF HIS FORCES TO SHU, NOW WOULD BE THE PERFECT CHANCE FOR US TO RECLAIM JINGZHOU.

MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR A CAMPAIGN ON JINGZHOU IMMEDIATELY!

MOTHER!

OH NO YOU WON'T! I WON'T ALLOW IT!

YOU ALREADY OWN 81 COMMANDERIES WITH RICH, FERTILE LANDS AND YET YOU'RE STILL DISSATISFIED!?

MOREOVER, MY PRECIOUS DAUGTHER IS IN JINGZHOU AND LIU BEI IS NOW MY SON-IN-LAW! SO THROW AWAY YOUR FOOLISH GREED LEST YOU PROVOKE ME.

YES, MOTHER...
QUAN! DO YOU UNDER-STAND ME!?
GOOD, THEN I'LL EXCUSE MYSELF.

IF I LET THIS GOLDEN CHANCE SLIP BY, THEN WHEN, IF EVER, WILL I HAVE JINGZHOU?

WHEW...

DIFFERENT TACTIC?

MY LORD, THE DOWAGER IS MERELY CONCERNED FOR HER DAUGTHER, WHOM SHE IS VERY FOND OF. I DOUBT SHE'D OPPOSE US IF WE USED A DIFFERENT TACTIC.

THEN, HAVE THEM DELIVER A LETTER TO YOUR SISTER, INFORMING HER THAT THE DOWAGER IS ON HER DEATHBED AND REQUESTS HER URGENT RETURN.

HMM...

FIRST, 500 SOLDIERS AND A CAPTAIN WILL SNEAK INSIDE JINGZHOU, DISGUISED AS MERCHANTS.

HM...

AND IF SHE CAN COME BACK WITH LIU BEI'S SON ADOU, HE WILL PROVE TO BE A MOST VALUABLE ASSET IN OUR NEGOTIATION FOR JINGZHOU... EVEN IF LIU BEI REFUSES OUR DEMANDS, WITH YOUR SISTER BACK IN WU, I DOUBT THE DOWAGER WILL DISPROVE OF A MILITARY CAMPAIGN.

BUT WHOM TO ENTRUST THIS TASK...?

AN EXCEL-LENT IDEA, ZHANG ZHAO.

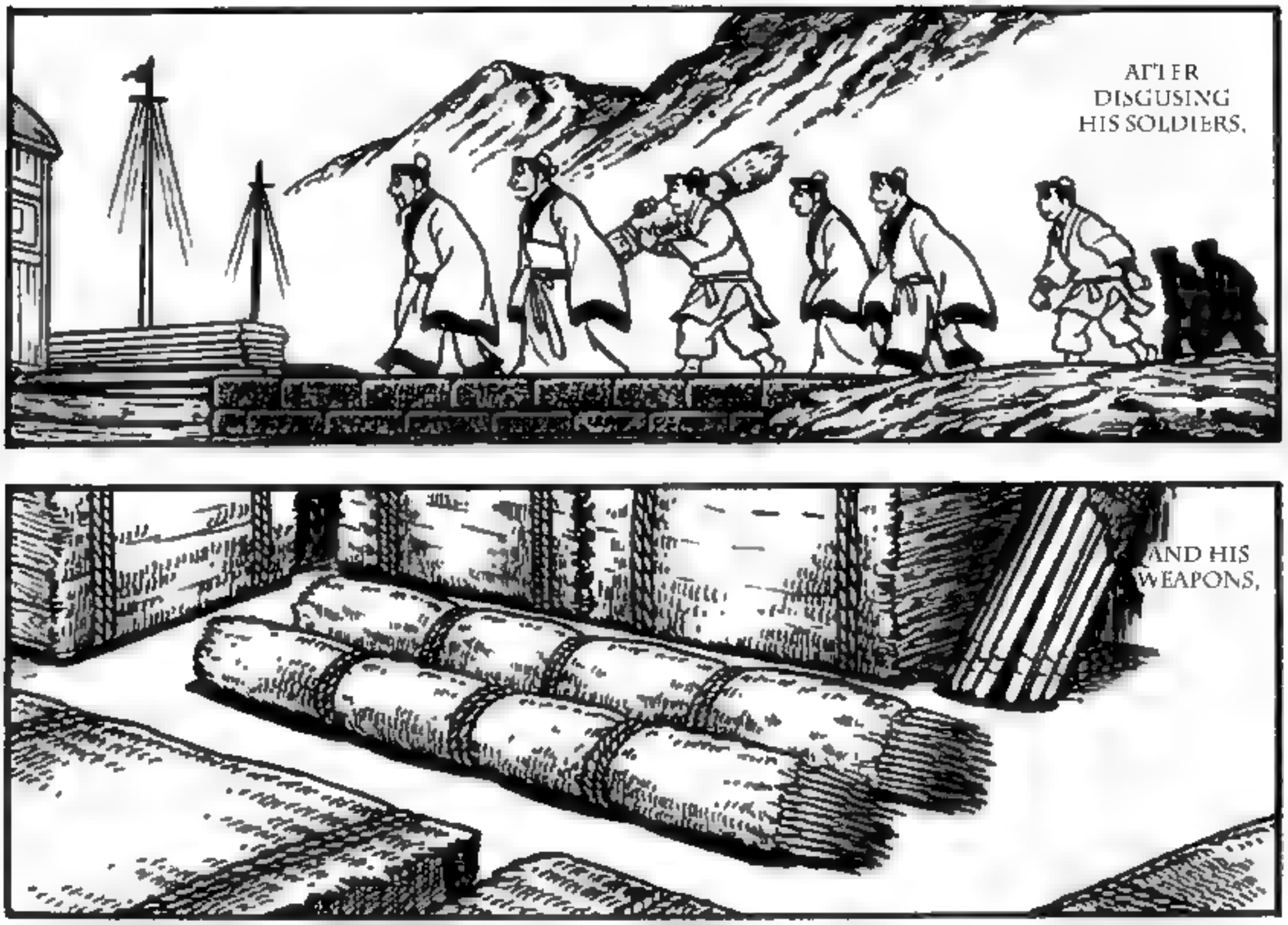
CALL ZHOU SHAN AT ONCE.

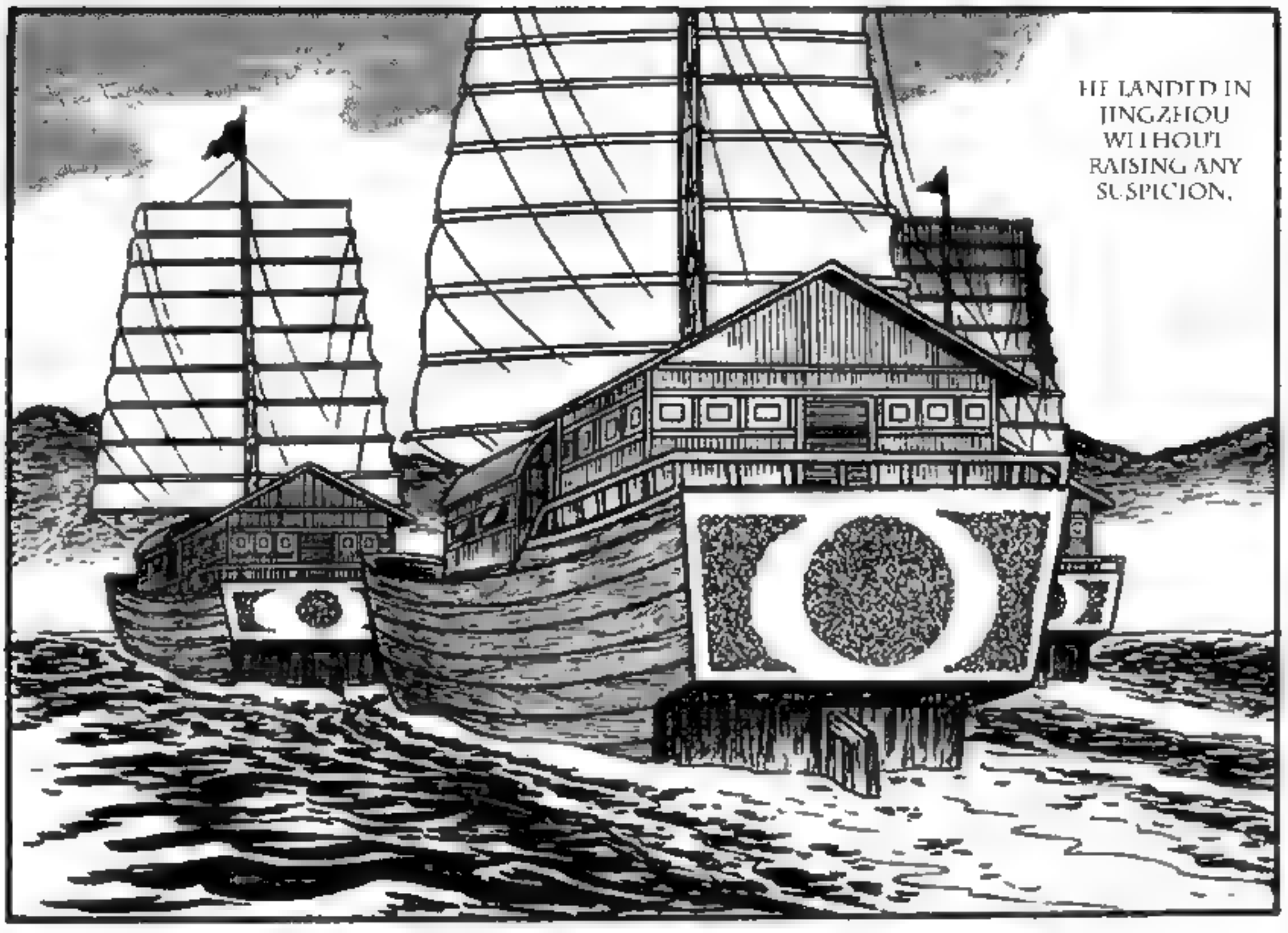
THEN SEND THE ORDER AT ONCE.

AH, ZHOU SHAN WILL BE PREFECT! A BRAVE, LOYAL MAN WHO IS ALREADY WELL ACQUAINTED WITH MY SISTER.

YES, MY LORD.

AND SO ZHOU SHAN WAS ENTRUSTED WITH THIS SECRET OPERATION


AFTER
DISGUSING
HIS SOLDIERS,
AND HIS
WEAPONS,
HE TOOKS
MERCHANT
VESSELS AND
HEADED TO
JINGZHOU


HE LANDED IN JINGZHOU WITHOUT RAISING ANY SUSPICION.

AND ENTERED THE CITY OF JINGZHOU ALONE

LET HIM IN.

A MAN NAMED ZHOU SHAN WISHES TO SPEAK WITH ME?

YES, MILADY.

PLEASE COME THIS WAY.

I HOPE YOU'VE BEEN DOING WELL.

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, ZHOU SHAN!

I WAS ORDERED TO DELIVER THIS LETTER.

SO WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE FROM WU...?

I WOULD ADVISE YOU TO TAKE ADOU AND VISIT HER... IT MAY BE YOUR LAST CHANCE TO SEE HER IN THIS WORLD.

I'M AFRAID SO... IN HER DELIRIOUS STATE, SHE CALLS FOR YOUR NAME NIGHT AND DAY.

IS... IS MY MOTHER REALLY THAT SICK!?

I DON'T THINK THAT IS WISE.

YES, BUT DIRECTOR GENERAL KONGMING KEEPS A STRICT WATCH ON WHO ENTERS AND LEAVES JINGZHOU. I MUST OBTAIN HIS PERMISSION FIRST.

BUT WE'LL SURELY BE HOUNDED IF I LEAVE WITHOUT PERMISSION.

WHAT IF HE WERE TO TELL YOU TO OBTAIN YOUR HUSBAND'S APPROVAL FIRST? CONSIDERING HE'S ALL THE WAY IN SHU AT THE MOMENT, IT MIGHT BE TOO LATE BY THE TIME YOU CAN RETURN TO WU.

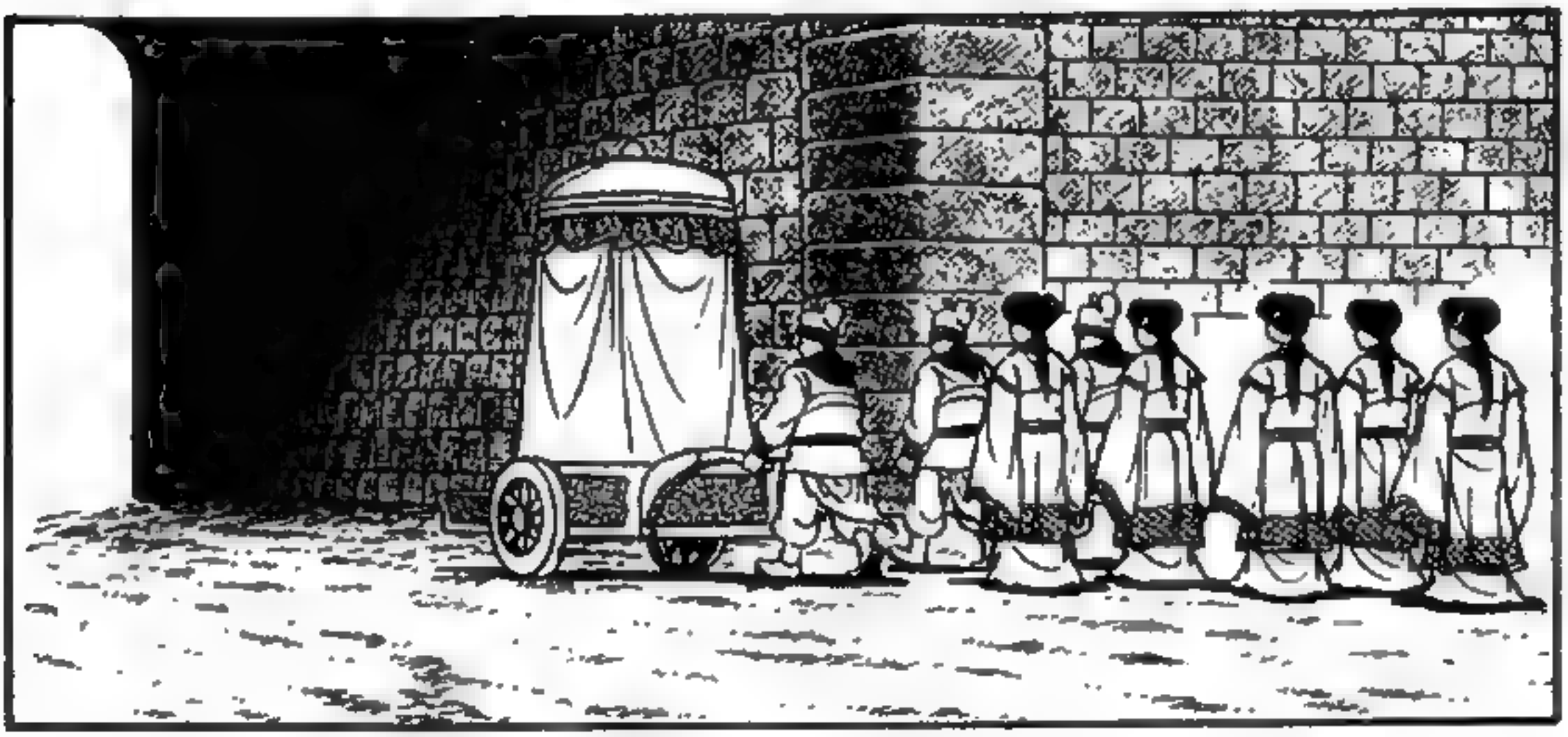
OHH!

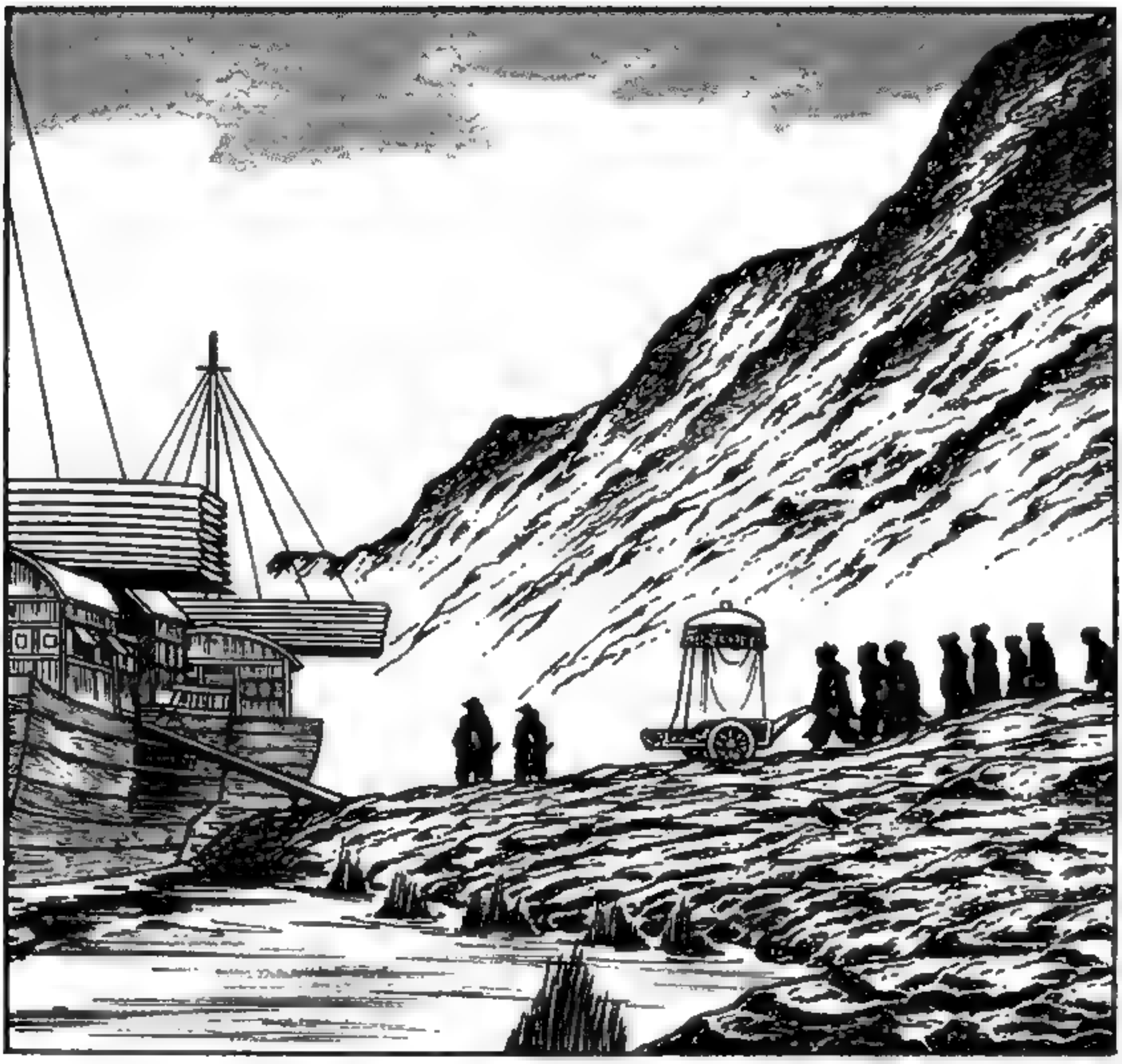
WORRY NOT, MILADY. I'VE ALREADY PREPARED SHIPS ALONG THE YANGTZE RIVER.

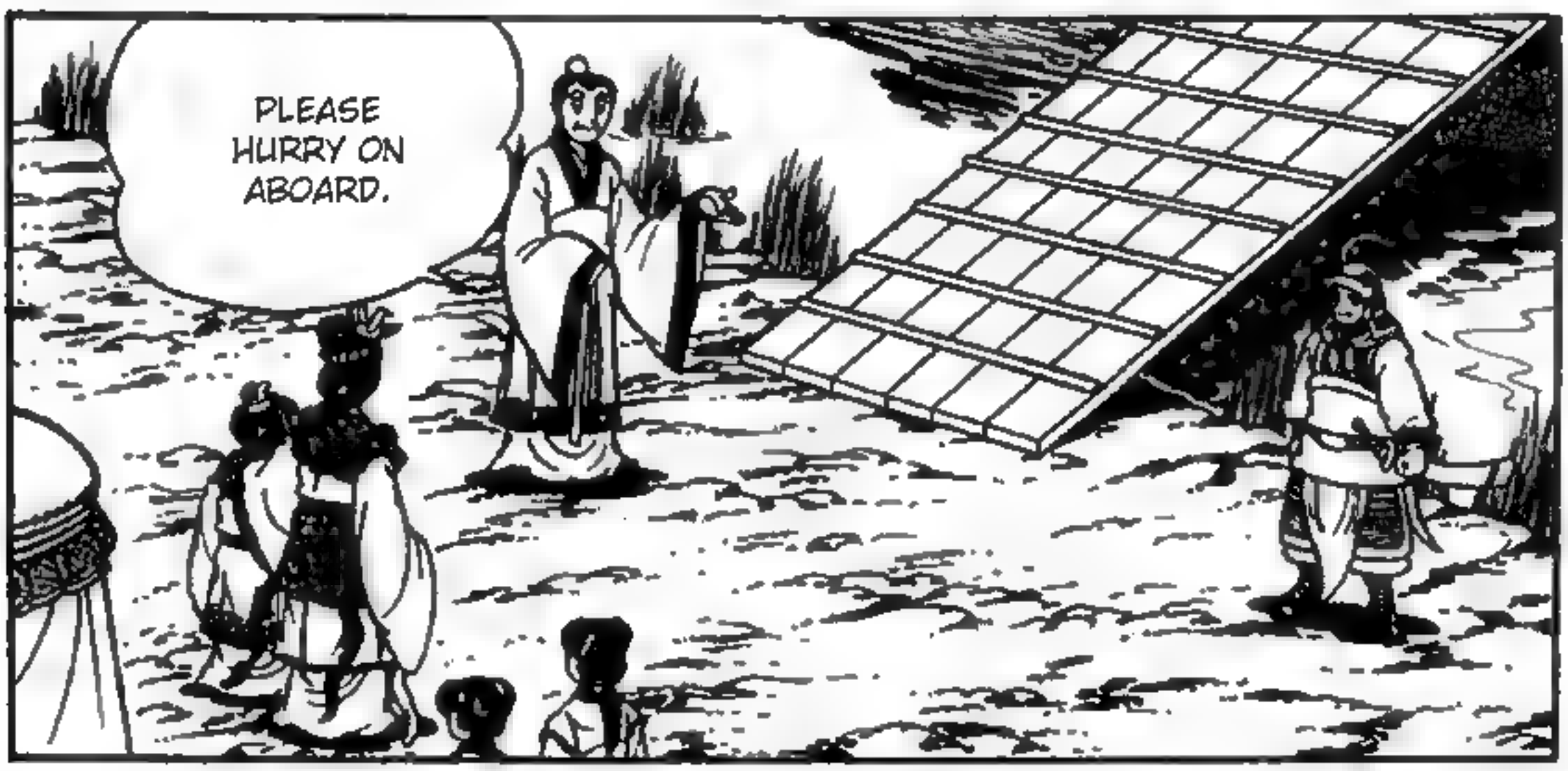
YES, MILADY.

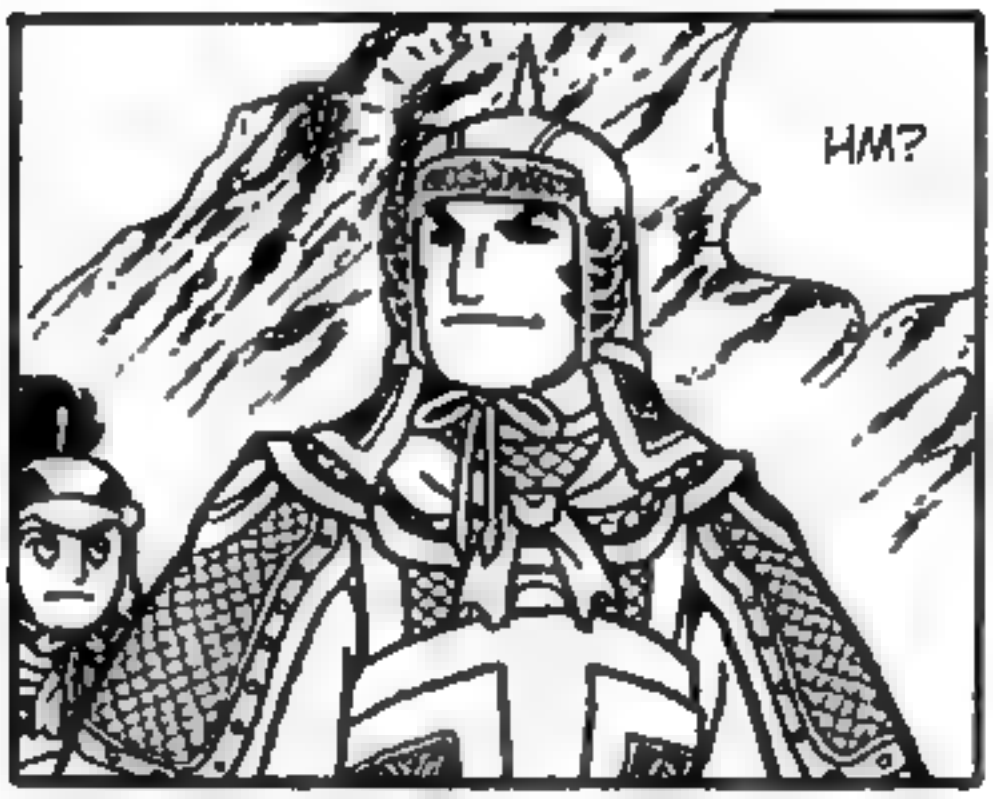
PREPARE TO LEAVE AT ONCE.

YES, MOTHER.
ADOLI, YOUR STEP-GRANDMOTHER IS VERY ILL RIGHT NOW. I WANT US BOTH TO PAY HER A VISIT.

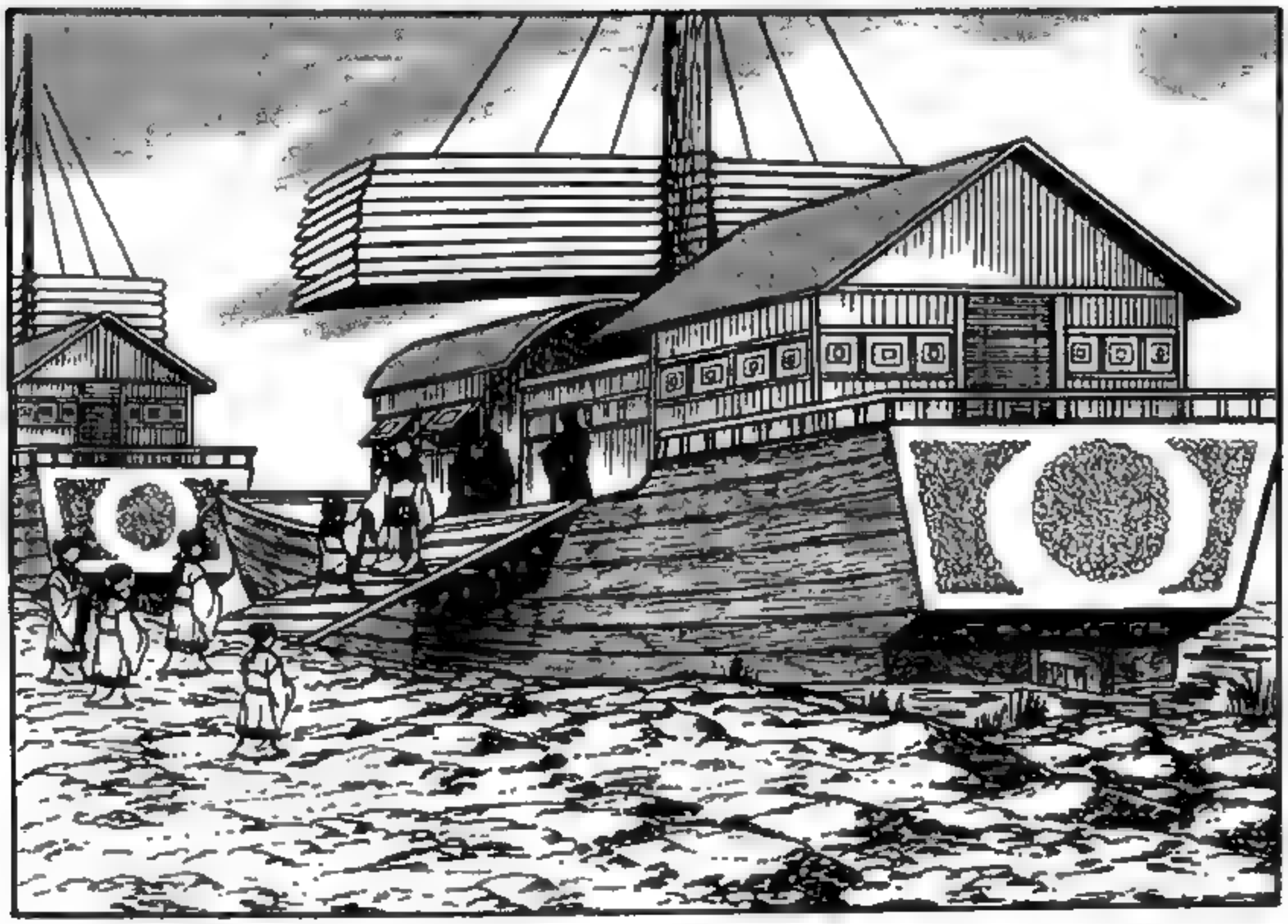


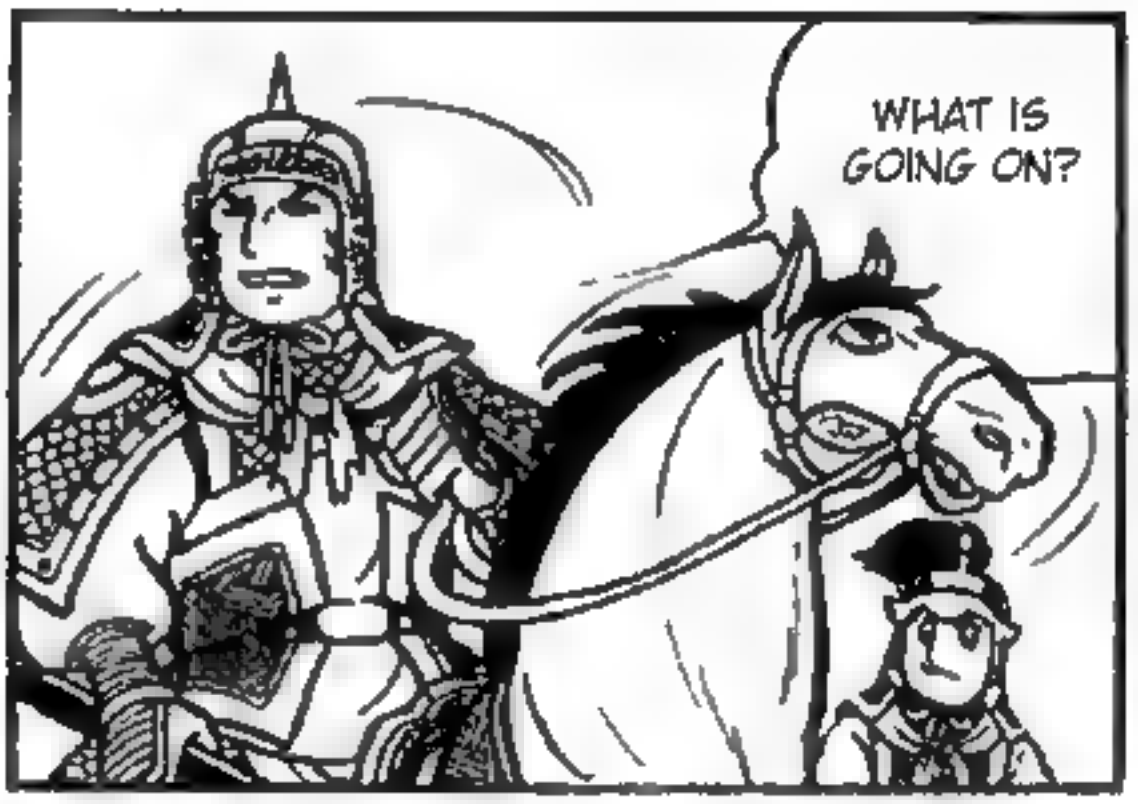



PLEASE HURRY ON ABOARD.


HM?

WHY ARE THERE SHIPS DOCKED OUT HERE?

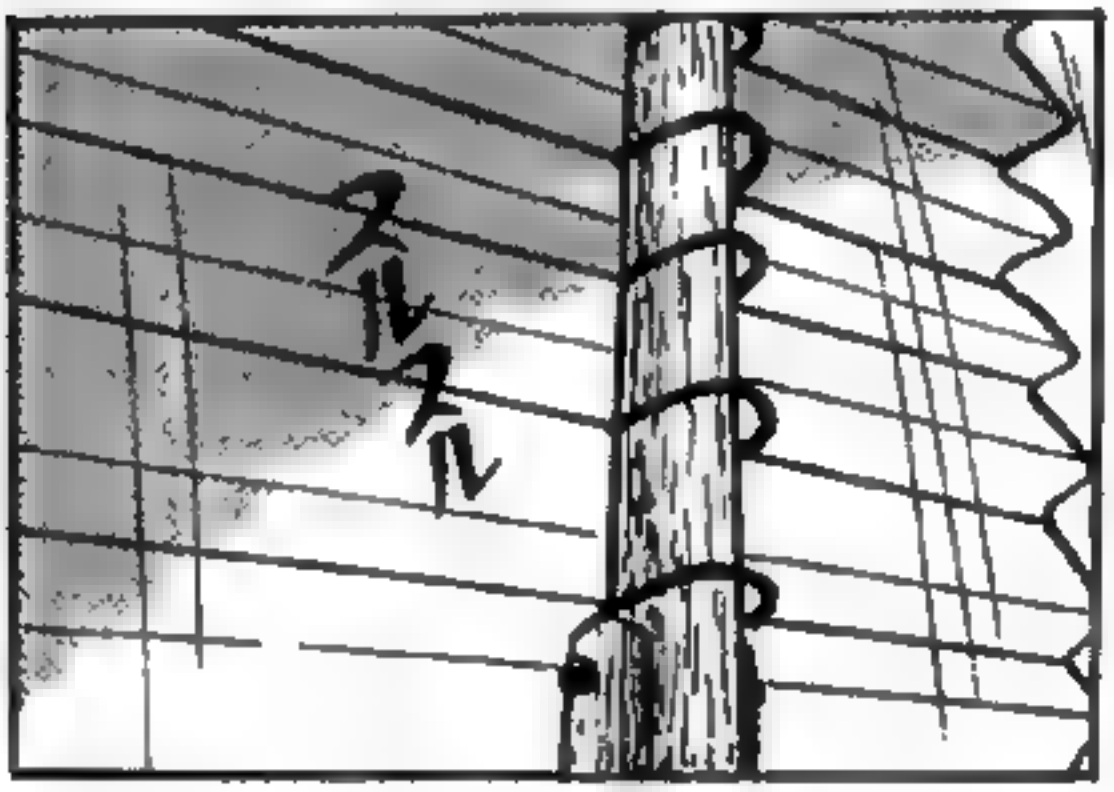


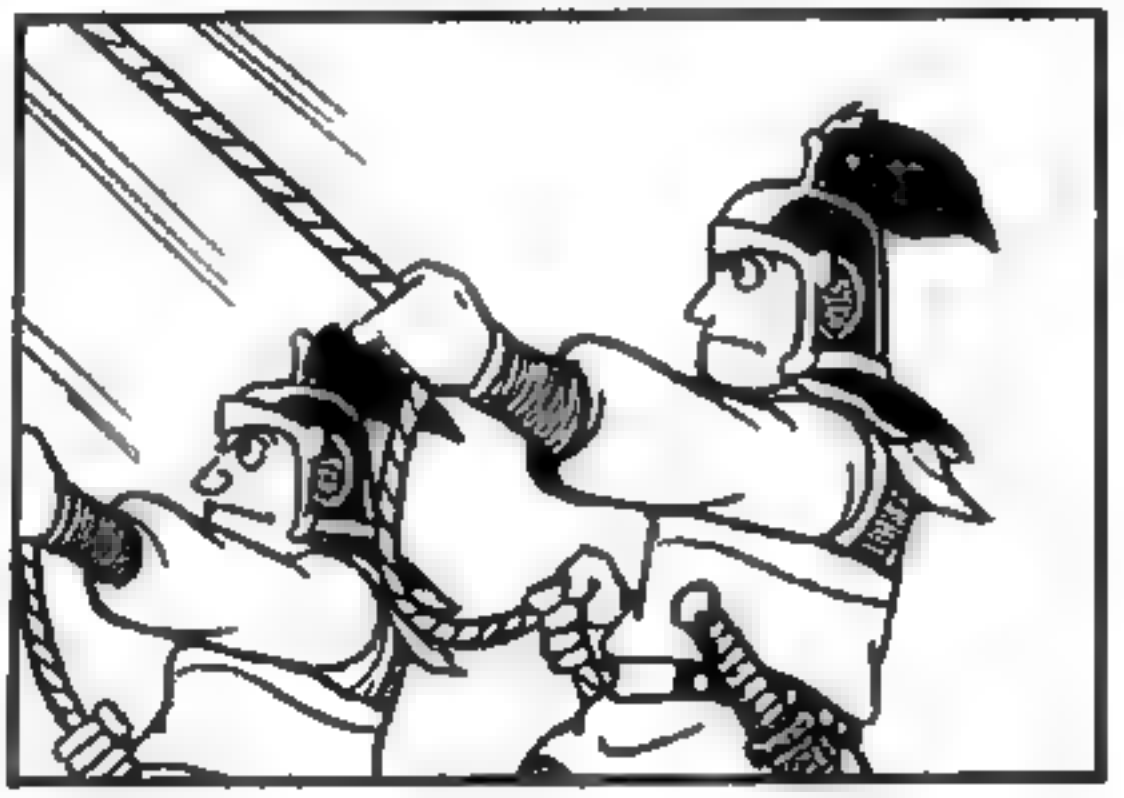

WHAT IS GOING ON?

ISN'T THAT LADY SUN AND MY LORD'S SON!?

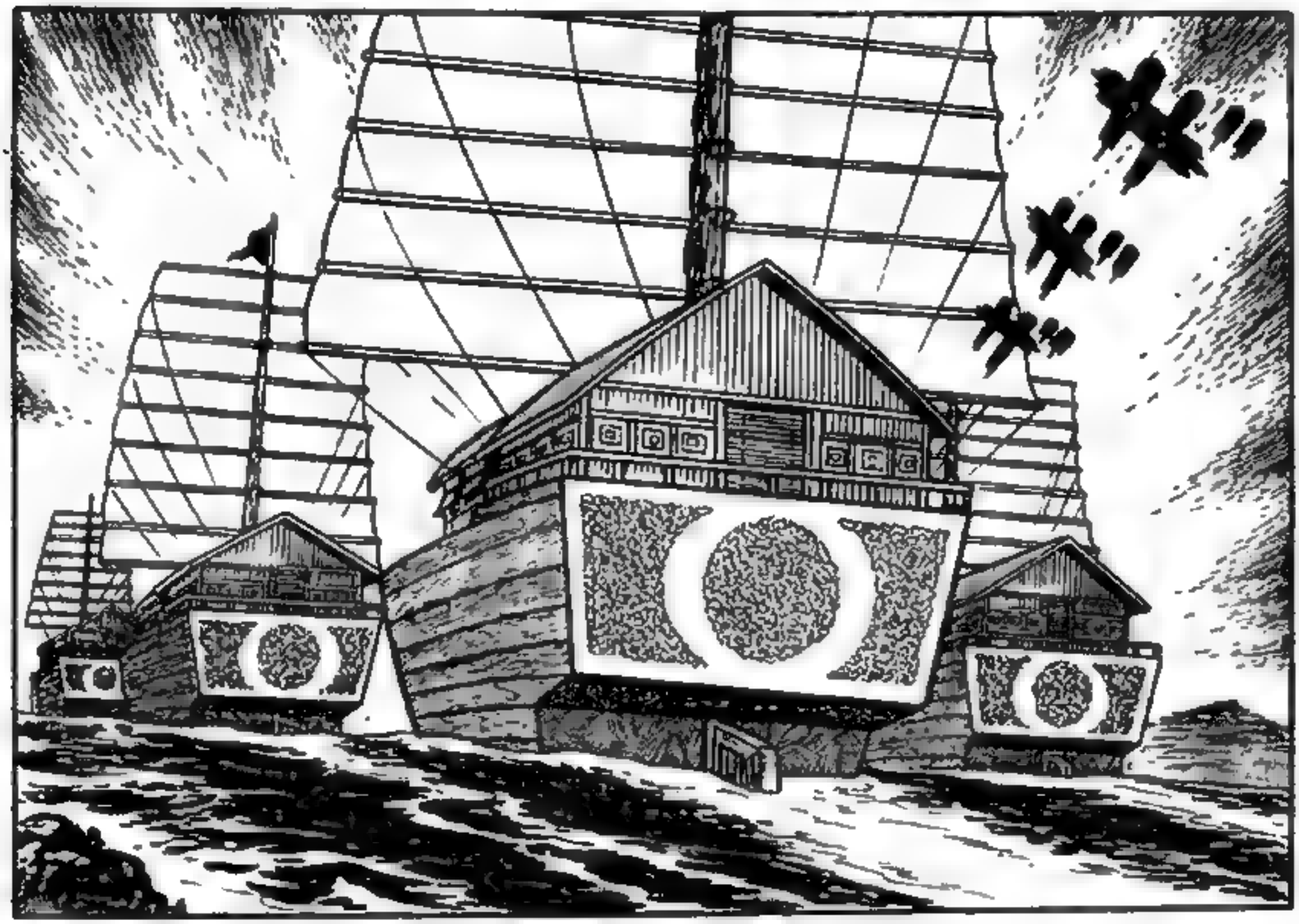
HALT RIGHT THERE!

RAISE THE SAILS!

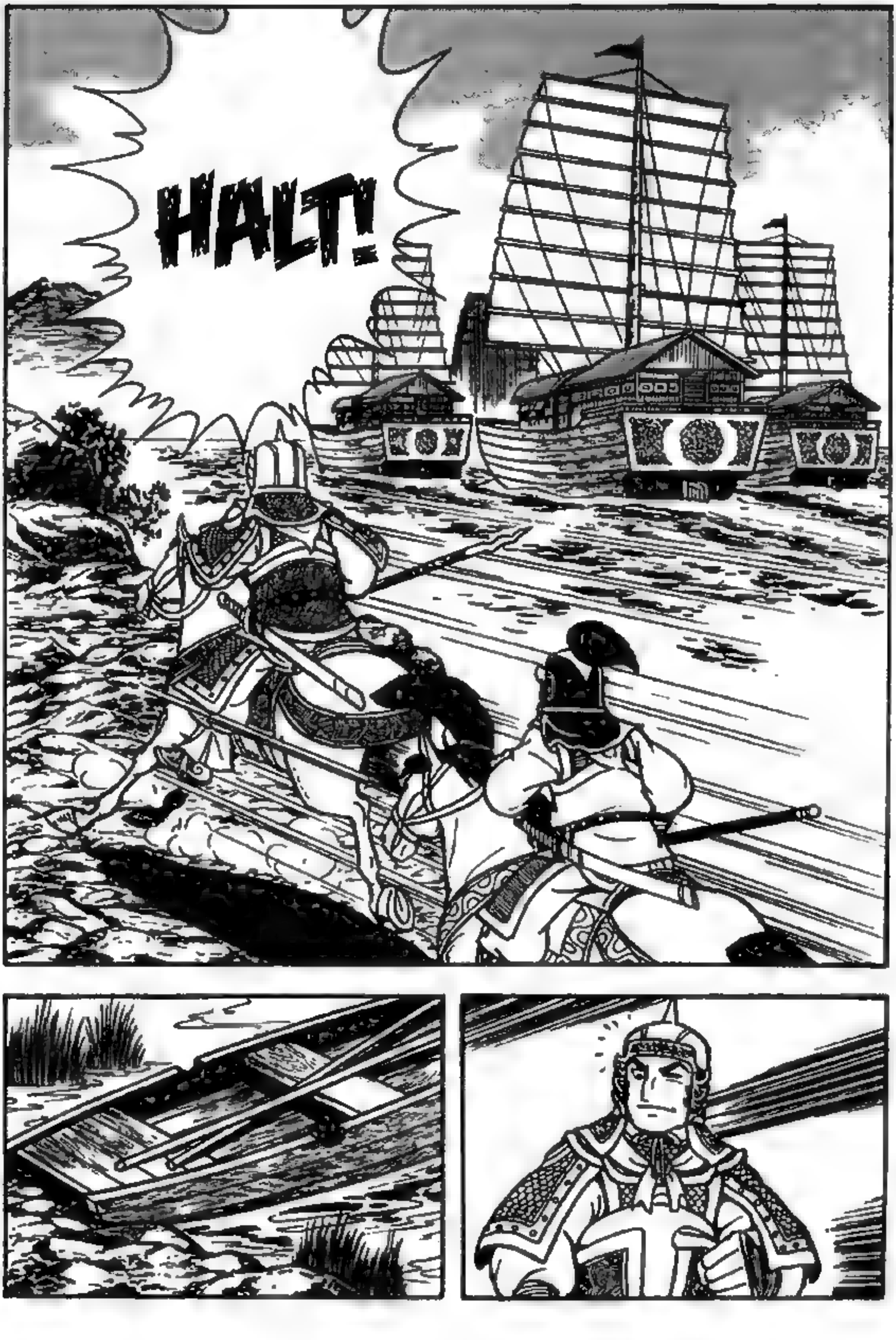




I SAID HALT!

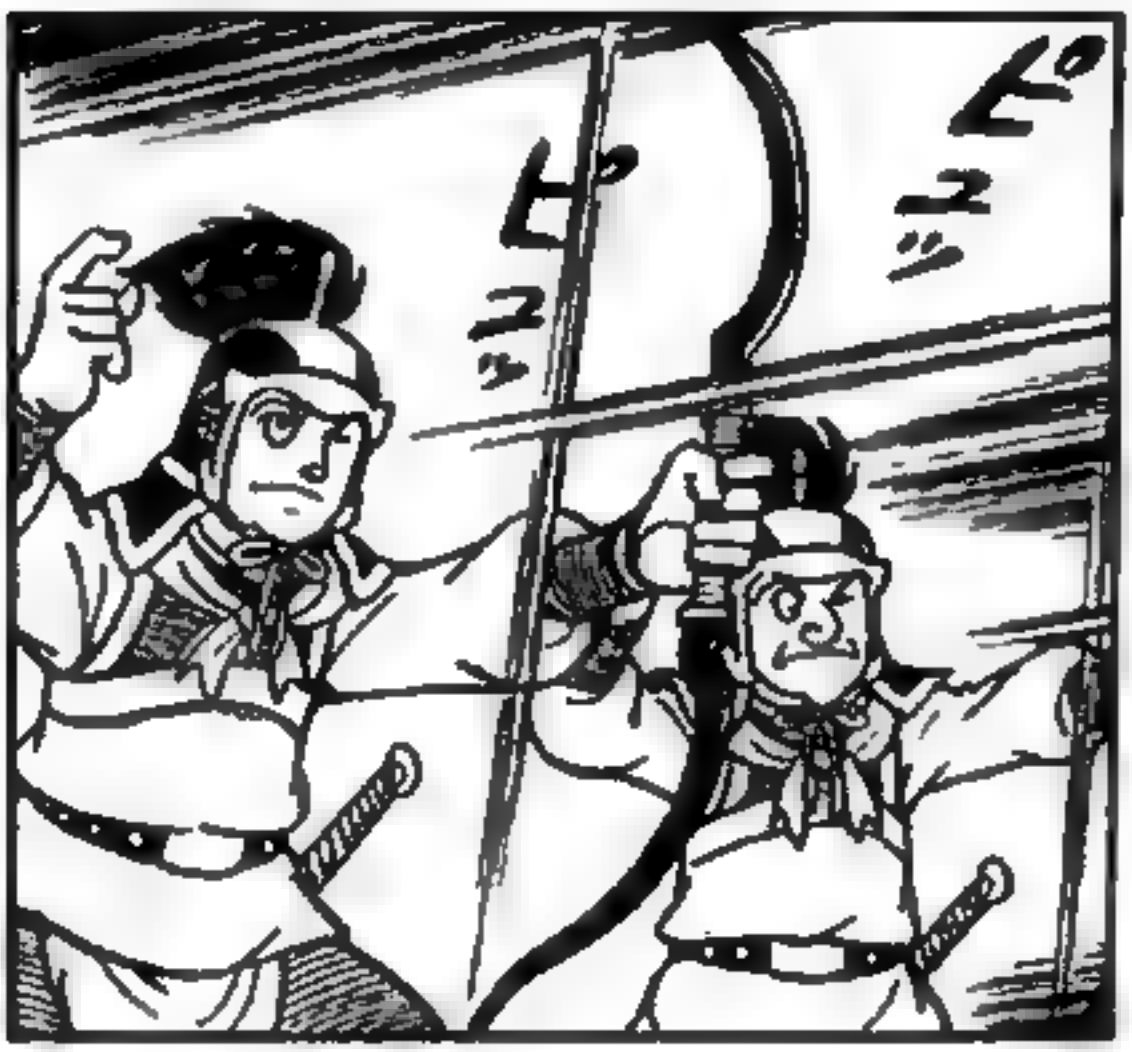


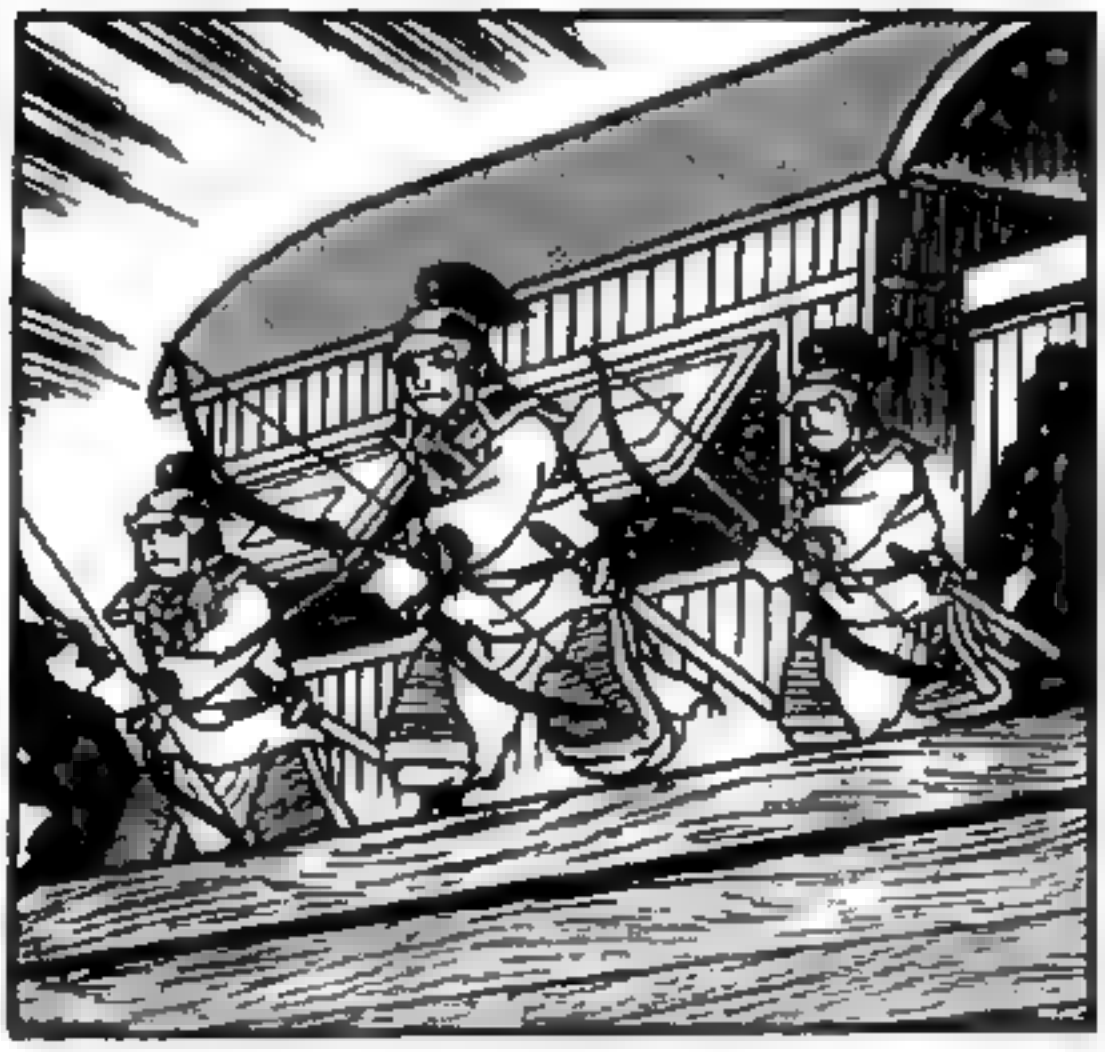
ARE YOU BASTARDS DEAF!?

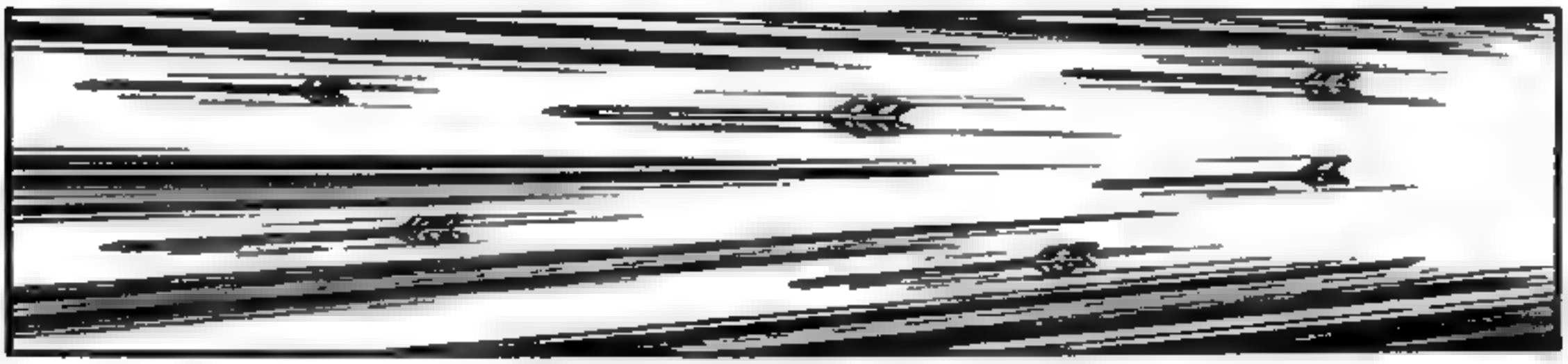

HALT!

ROW!

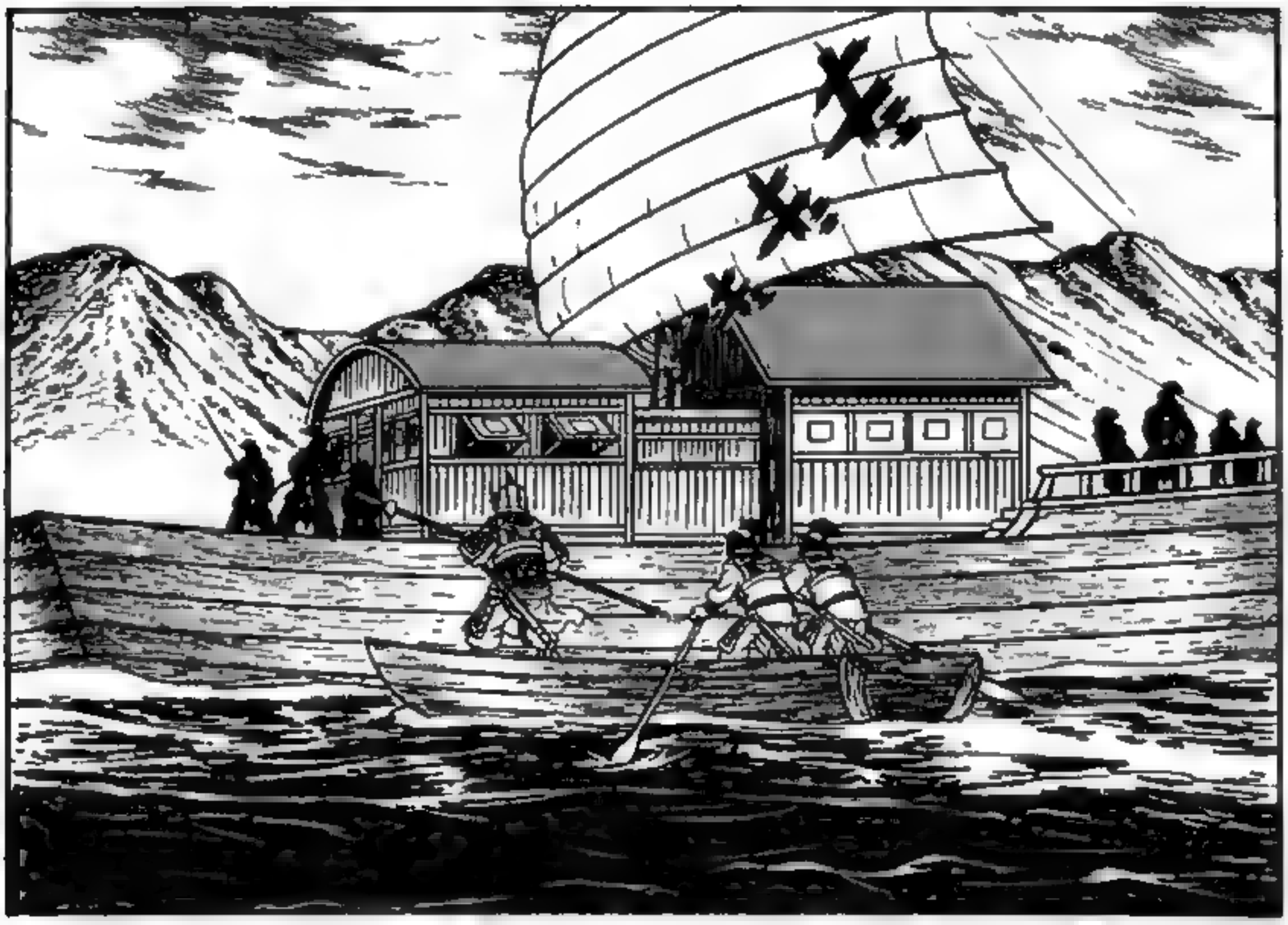
MILADY! YOU MUST STOP THE SHIP!

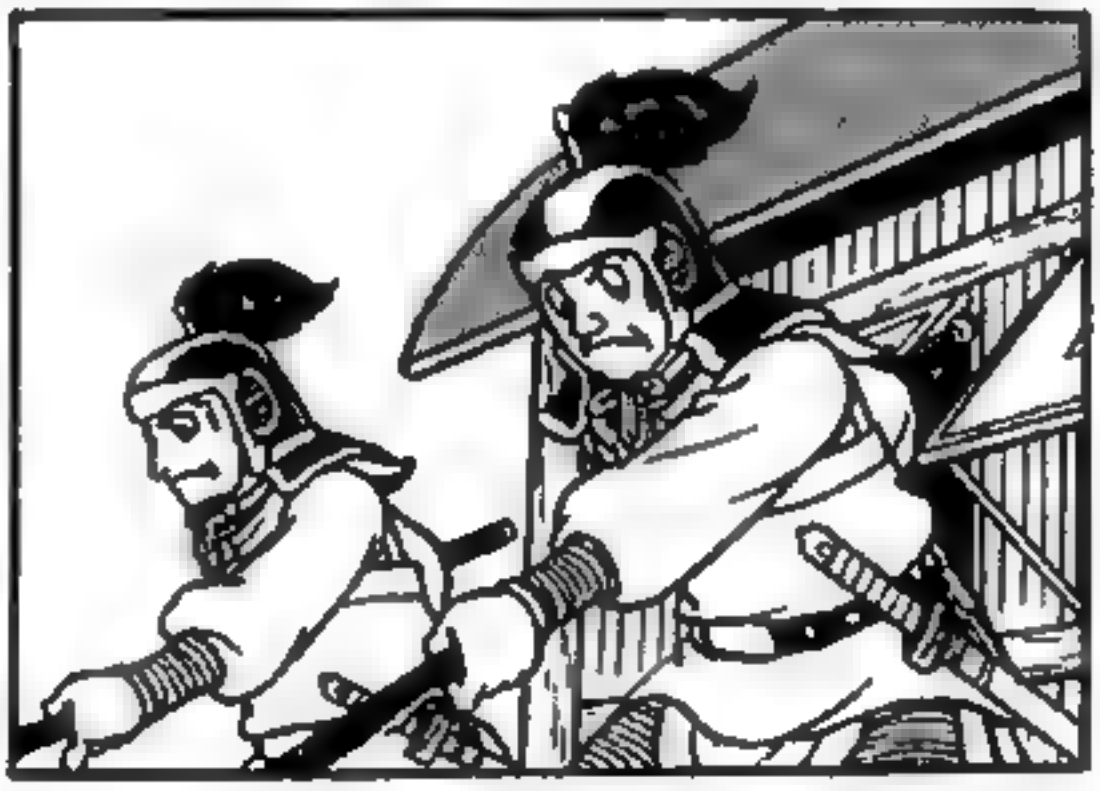


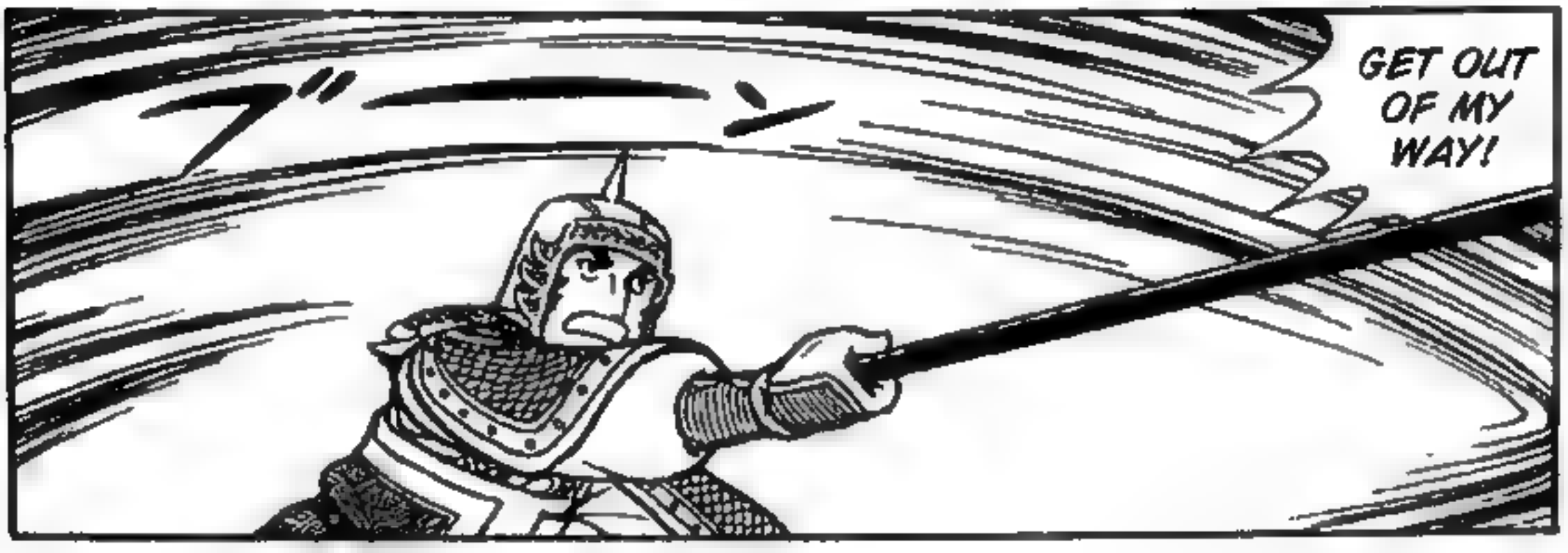




KEEP ROWING! PUT YOUR BACKS INTO IT!






GET OUT OF MY WAY!

DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT I AM ZHAO ZILONG OR ARE YOU STUPID ENOUGH TO THINK YOU STAND A CHANCE AGAINST ME!?

MILADY! I DEMAND TO KNOW WHERE YOU'RE PLANNING TO SNEAK OFF TO SECRETLY!?

IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEN WHY ARE YOU TAKING ADOU?

MY MOTHER IS AT DEATH'S DOOR. I HAD NO TIME TO WAIT FOR KONGMING'S PERMISSION.

AND A HEIR TO A STATE IS ALMOST AS VALUABLE AS THE STATE ITSELF.

HE MAY BE MILADY'S SON, BUT HE IS ALSO MY LORD'S HEIR.

ADOU IS MY SON. SINCE I SAW NO OTHER ADEQUATE TO TAKE CARE OF HIM, IT IS ONLY RIGHT THAT HIS MOTHER TAKES HIM ALONG.

SILENCE! A MERE SERVANT SHOULD NOT INTERFERE IN THE PRIVATE FAMILY MATTERS OF HIS LORD!

IT IS FOR THAT REASON THAT I RISKED MY LIFE TO SAVE HIM AT CHANGBAN, DESPITE BEING SURROUNDED BY A MILLION OF CAO CAO'S SOLDIERS. AND YET YOU DARE CARELESSLY TAKE HIM OUT AS IF HE WERE ONE OF YOUR PERSONAL BELONGINGS?

YOU DARE DEFY ME!?

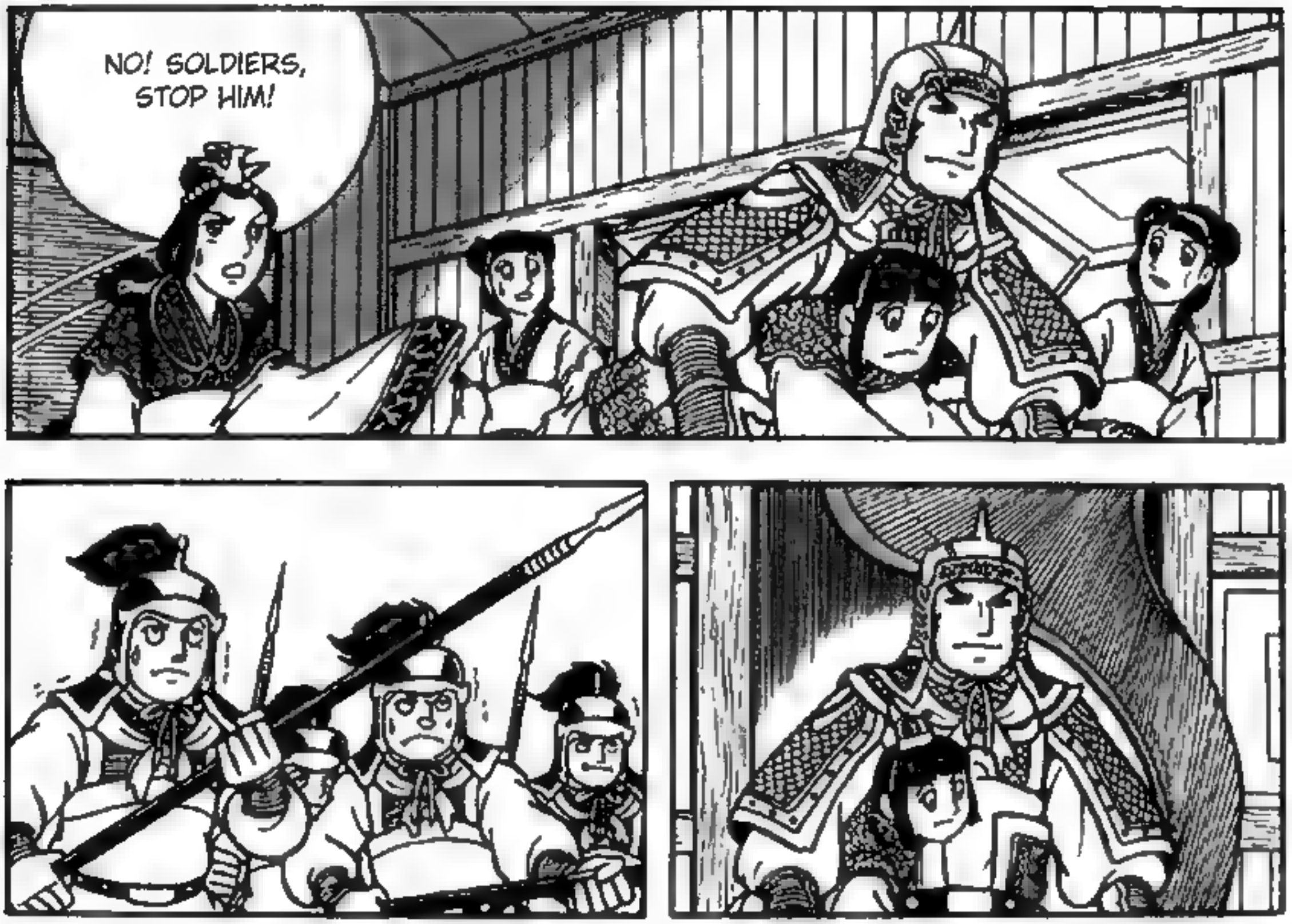
DO NOT MISUNDER-STAND. I WILL NOT STOP YOU FROM RETURNING TO WU. HOWEVER, I WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO TAKE ADOU.

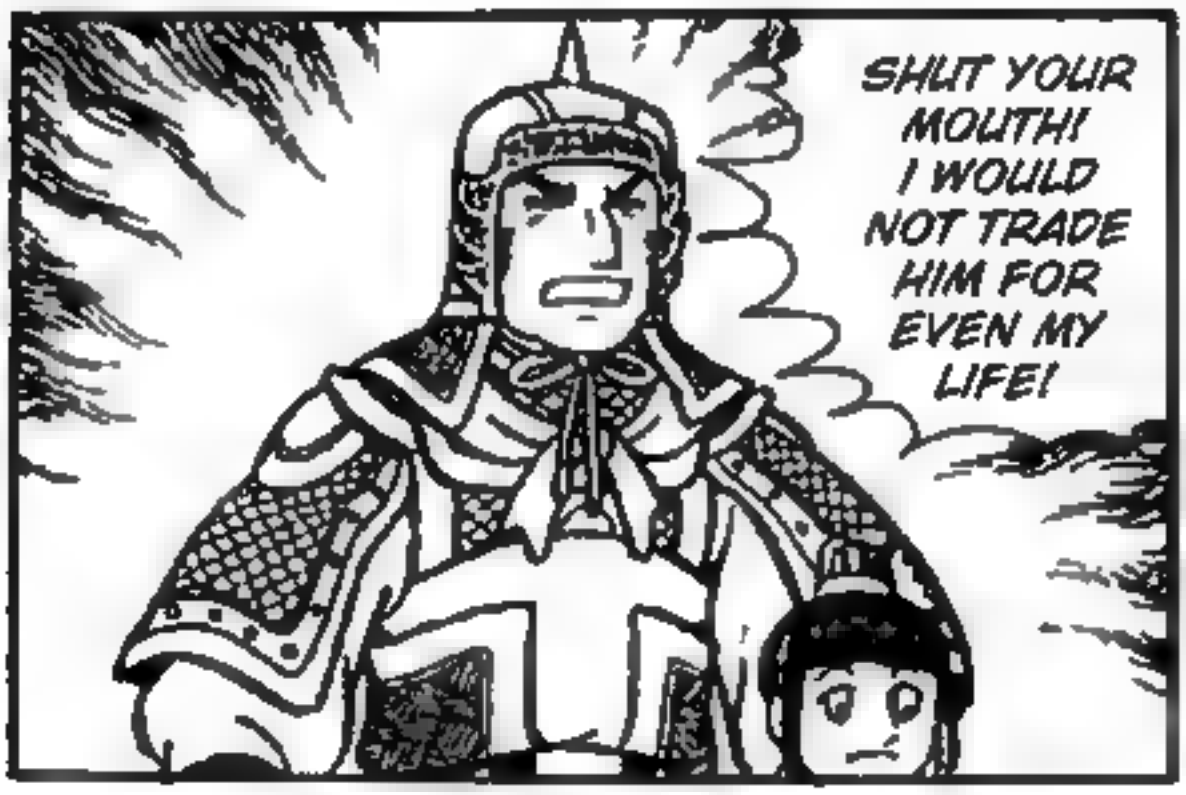
GIRLS! DEAL WITH THIS IMPUDENT RUFFIAN!

DO NOT WASTE YOUR ENERGY WITH THREATS, MILADY. I WILL NOT CHANGE MY MIND.

ADOU, YOU WILL COME WITH ME BACK TO JINGZHOU.

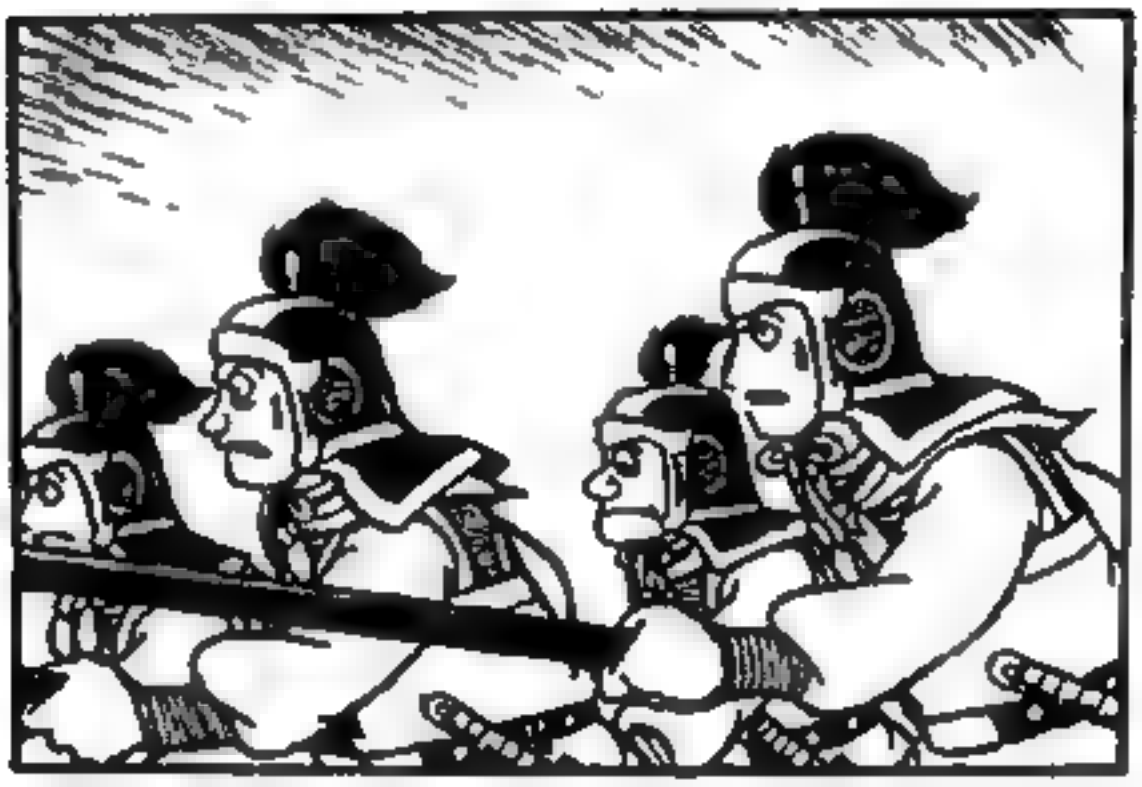
DON'T INTERFERE!


NO! SOLDIERS, STOP HIM!
CURSES, THE BOAT IS GONE!


SHUT YOUR MOUTH! I WOULD NOT TRADE HIM FOR EVEN MY LIFE!

ZHAO ZILONG! LEAVE ADOU HERE!

I AM NOT SO PATHETIC AS TO BE KILLED BY YOU NAMELESS SOLDIERS.



ZHANG FEI!

STOP RIGHT THERE! YOU DARE KIDNAP THE SON OF MY LORD WHILE HE'S AWAY!?

MEN! LET US PROTECT OUR LORD'S SON!

YES, I HAVE HIM HERE WITH ME.

ZHAO ZILONG! IS ADOU UNHARMED?

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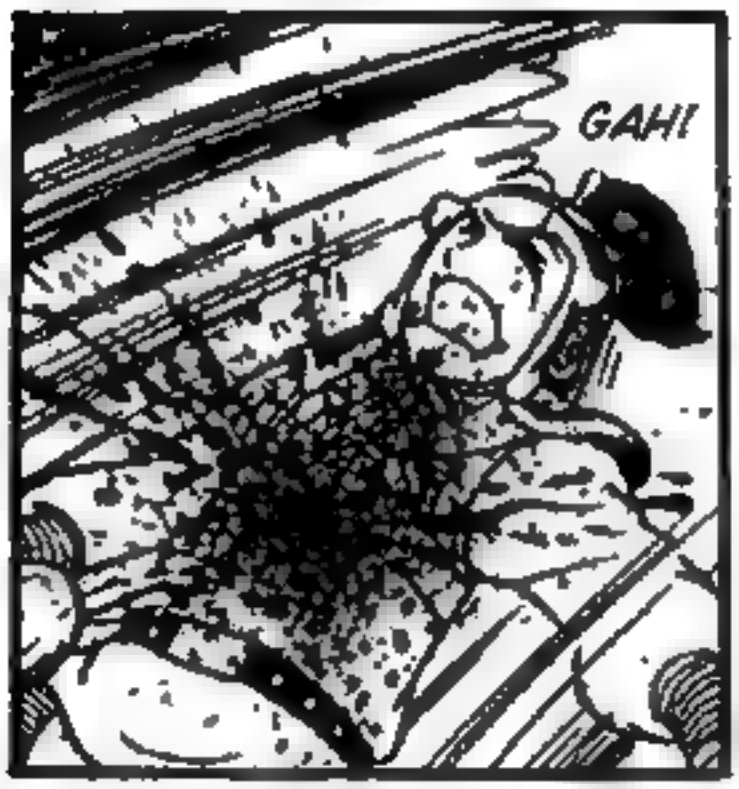
ATTACK! DO NOT LET THEM BOARD THE SHIP!

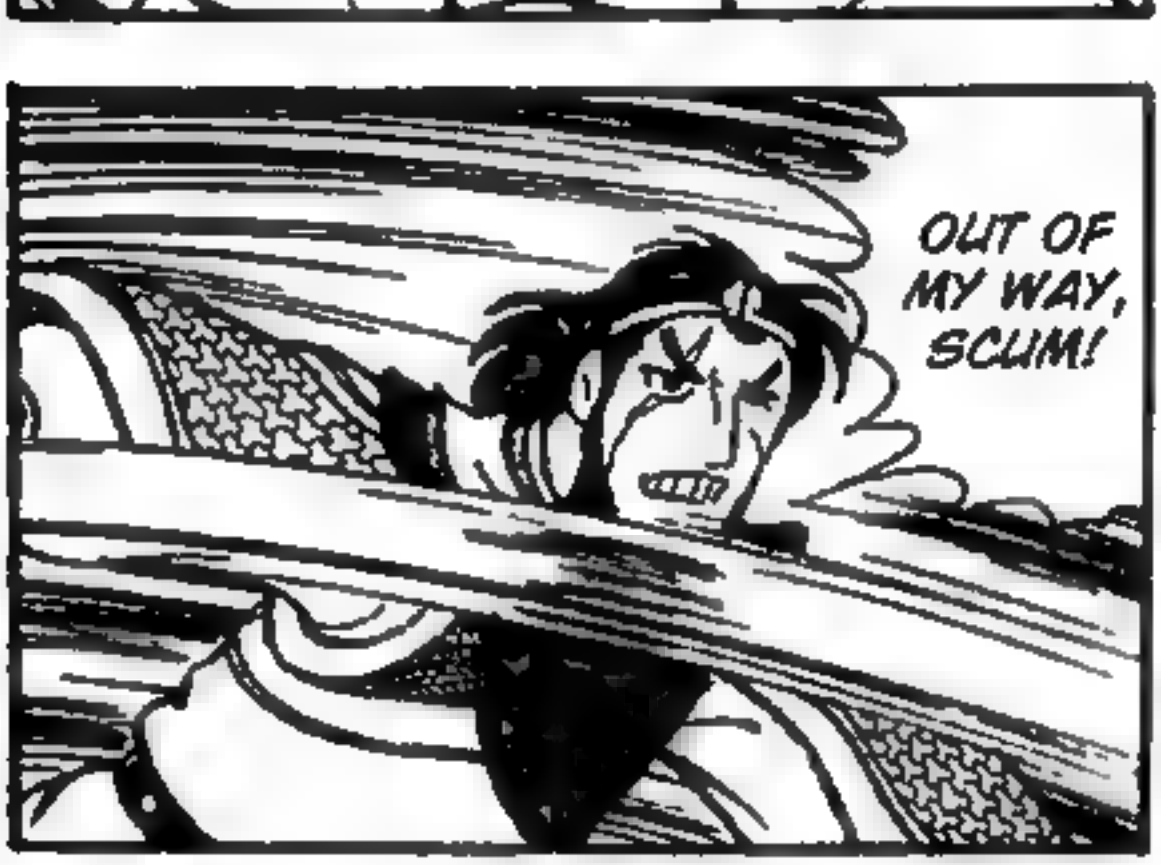

GAH!

AGHH!

HAHH!

?

WHY YOU...!


OUT OF MY WAY, SCUM!

ACK!
AGHH!
WHERE'S LADY SUN?

SO YOU'RE IN HERE...

GASP!

WHEN A HUSBAND LEAVES HIS HOME, IT IS HIS WIFE'S DUTY TO GUARD IT. YET HERE YOU ARE, NOT ONLY ABANDONING JINGZHOU BUT TAKING MY LORD'S SON ALONG! IS THIS HOW THE WOMEN OF WU BEHAVE!?

YOU DARE TREAT ME WITH SUCH OUTRAGEOUS DISRESPECT!?

WHETHER YOU RETURN WITH DIGNITY OR KICKING AND SCREAMING AS I DRAG YOU IS YOUR CHOICE.

A SINGLE PERSON'S CARELESS ACTIONS MAY VERY WELL BRING AN ENTIRE EMPIRE TO RUIN. NOW I SUGGEST YOU RETURN TO JINGZHOU.

I ONLY LEFT JINGZHOU IN A HURRY FOR I HEARD MY MOTHER WAS AT DEATH'S DOOR. IF I WAITED FOR PERMISSION, I MAY NEVER SEE MY MOTHER AGAIN. IF YOU BRUTES ARE SO INTENT ON KEEPING A FILIAL DAUGHTER AWAY FROM HER SICK MOTHER, THEN I WILL THROW MYSELF INTO THE RIVER AND JOIN MY MOTHER IN THE AFTERLIFE!

MN...

WHAT IS IT?

ZHAO ZILONG!

AS SERVANTS, IT WOULD BE UNTHINKABLE FOR US TO FORCE OUR LORD'S WIFE INTO SUICIDE.

SHE'S THREATENING TO DROWN HERSELF IF WE DON'T LET HER GO. WHAT SHOULD WE DO...?

LET ME SAY ONE THING BEFORE WE LEAVE, MILADY.

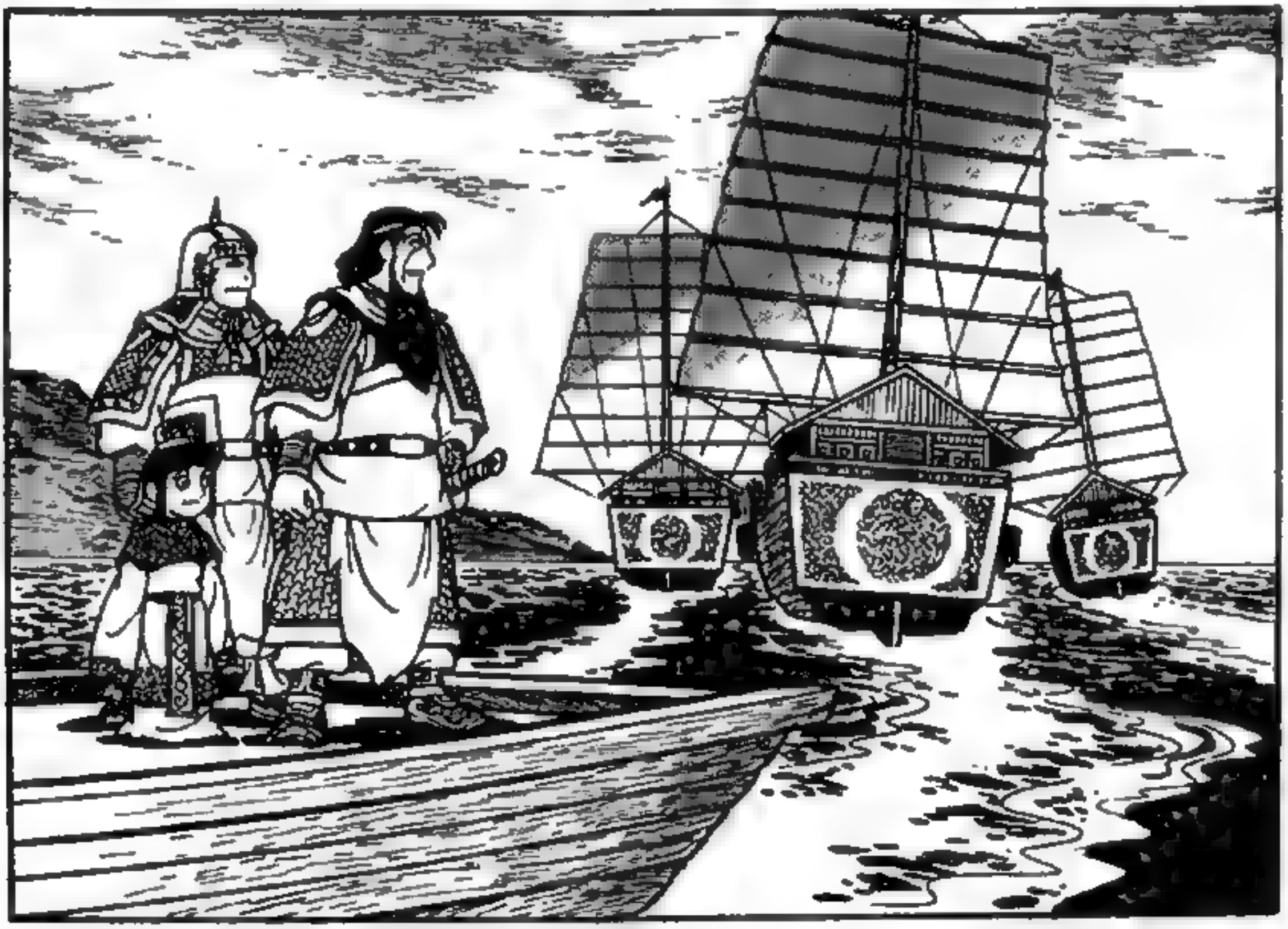
THERE'S NO OTHER CHOICE.

THEN SHOULD WE JUST LET HER GO BUT LEAVE ADOU HERE WITH US?

YOUR HUSBAND IS THE IMPERIAL UNCLE OF HAN. I BESEECH YOU AVOID DOING ANYTHING TO BESMIRCH HIS REPUTATION. THUS, YOU MUST RETURN AT ONCE YOU'VE TAKEN CARE OF MATTERS IN WU.

LET'S GO BACK NOW, ZHANG FEI.

SURE THING.

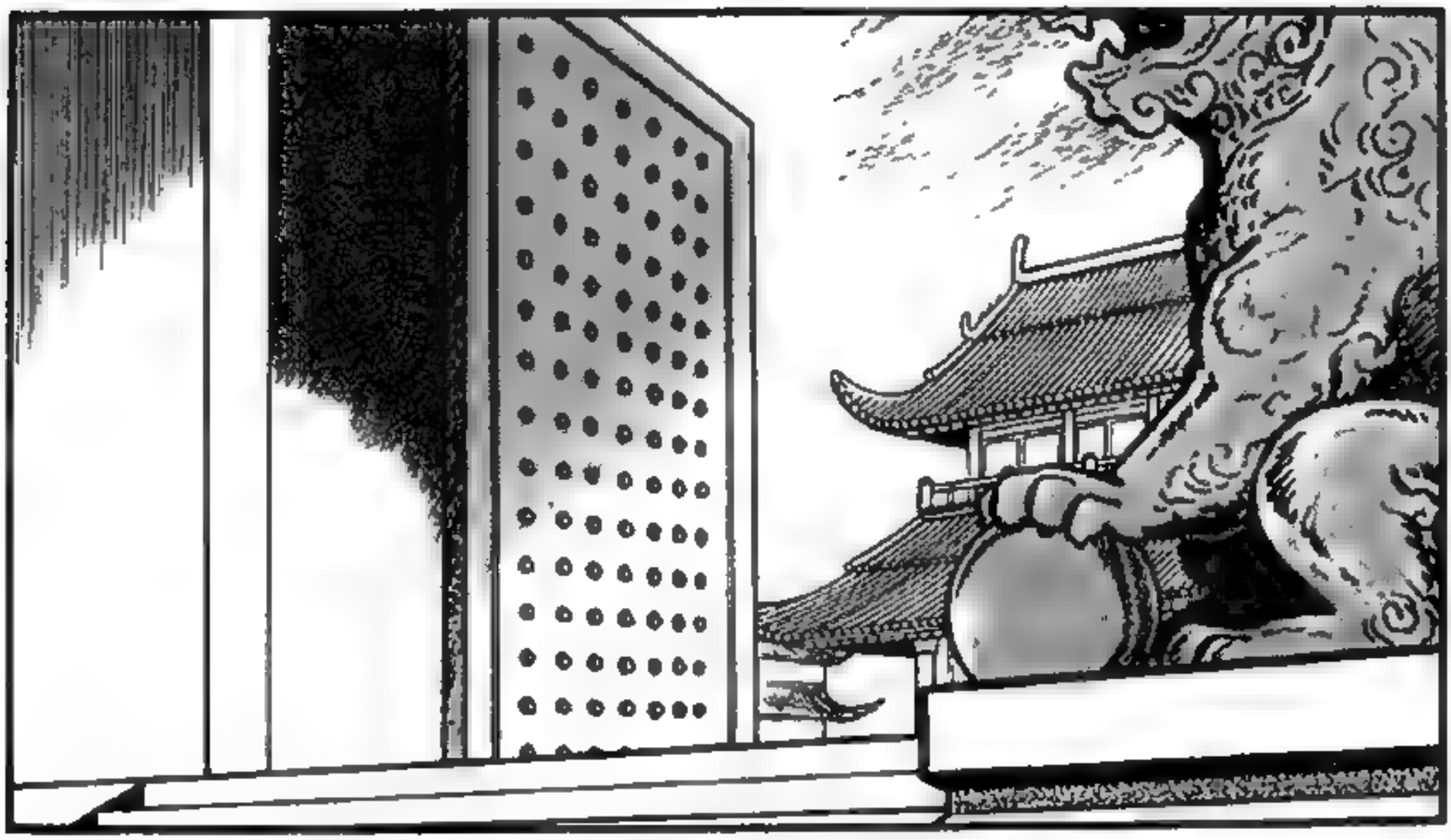


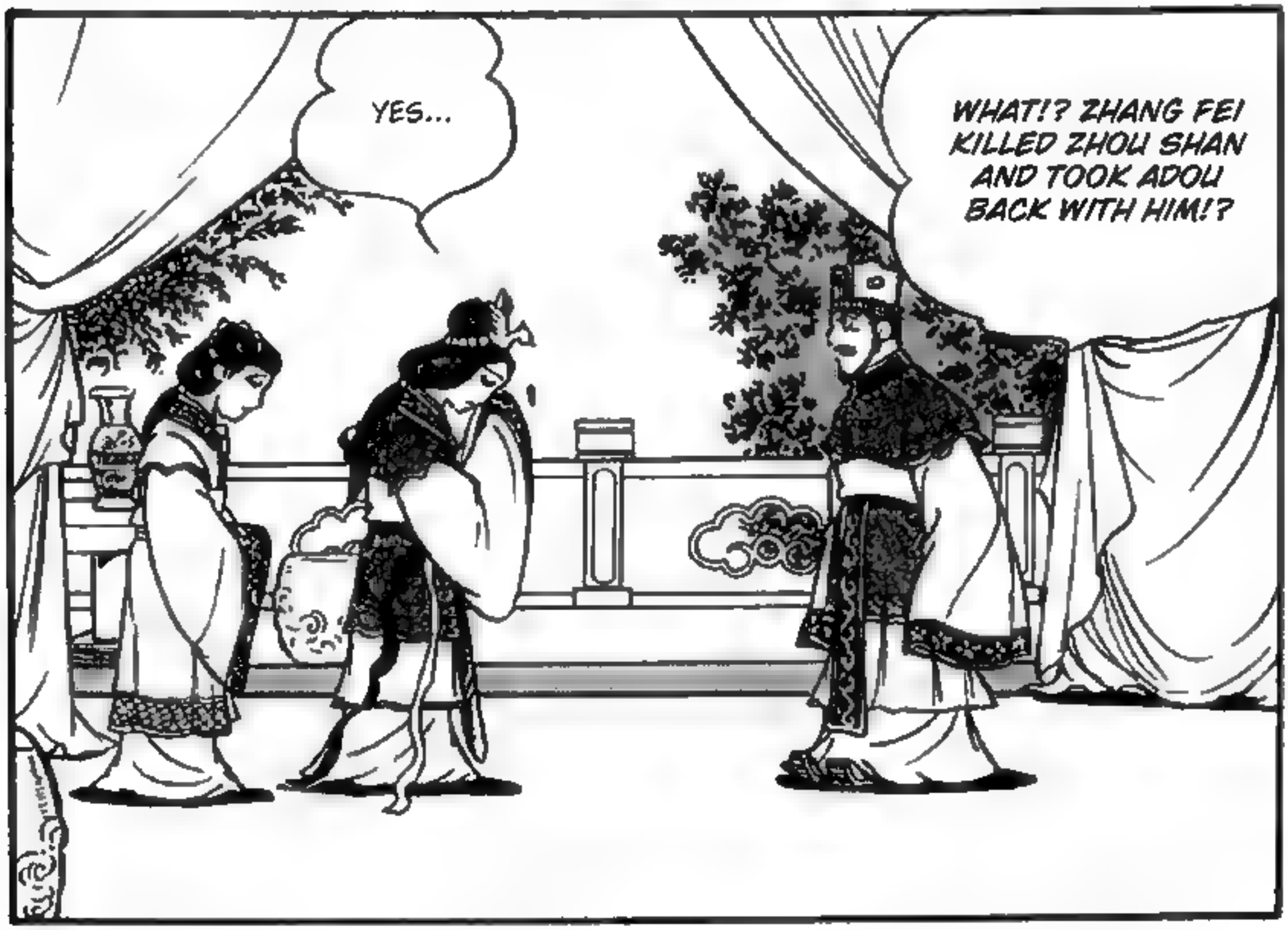
I RECEIVED A REPORT WHILE IN THE MIDST OF MY PATROL SO I CAME THIS WAY ON A BOAT AND I LUCKILY MANAGED TO FIND YOU.

BY THE WAY, HOW DID YOU KNOW TO COME HERE ON A BOAT?

IN ANY CASE, I'M JUST RELIEVED OUR LORD'S SON IS SAFE AND SOUND.

CAO CAO MARCHES SOUTH





GO PAY HER A VISIT IN HER PRIVATE CHAMBERS. SHE'S DOING QUITE FINE.

BUT HOW IS MOTHER DOING?

WOMEN SHOULD TALK THINGS OUT WITH WOMEN. I HAVE MATTERS TO ATTEND TO.

WHAT!?

GENTLEMEN, MY LITTLE SISTER HAS JUST RETURNED FROM JINGZHOU. IT SEEMS LIU BEI'S RETAINERS HAVE CHASED HER OUT WHILE THEIR LORD WAS AWAY.

WITH THIS, THERE ARE NO FAMILY RELATIONS HOLDING LIU BEI AND I TOGETHER. WE WILL THUS MAKE PLANS FOR WAR ON JINGZHOU. IF ANYONE HAS ANY GOOD IDEAS, THEN SPEAK NOW.

PARDON ME, MY LORD.

WHAT!?

BUT I'VE JUST RECEIVED REPORTS THAT CAO CAO IS HEADING SOUTH WITH AN ARMY OF 400,000 TO AVENGE HIS DEFEAT AT RED CLIFFS.

WHAT IS IT THIS TIME?

MY LORD!

HE LEFT THIS FINAL LETTER FOR YOU, HOWEVER.

YOUR FAITHFUL ADVISOR, ZHANG HONG, HAS SUCCUMBED TO DEATH THIS MORNING AFTER SEVERAL DAYS OF ILLNESS.

MY LORD, I THANK YOU AND THE SUN FAMILY FOR TREATING ME SO KINDLY OVER THE YEARS. THE LAST PIECE OF ADVICE I GIVE NOW IS TO RELOCATE THE CAPITAL OF WU FURTHER INSIDE YOUR BORDERS FOR SECURITY AND EASIER ADMINISTRATION OF YOUR LANDS. AFTER MUCH THINKING, I BELIEVE MOLING WOULD BE IDEAL.

GENTLEMEN, I HAVE DECIDED TO DO AS ZHANG HONG ADVISED.

ZHANG HONG! YOUR PATRIOTISM FOR WU EVEN IN YOUR VERY LAST MOMENTS MOVES MY HEART...

I HEREBY ORDER A NEW WALLED CITY IN MOLING TO BE BUILT. ITS NAME WILL BE JIANYE AND IT WILL BE OUR FUTURE CAPITAL CITY.*

*JIANYE. THE NAME CAN MEAN "FOUNDATION" AND IT'S PRESENTLY LOCATED IN MODERN DAY NANJING

WHAT IS IT, LU MENG?

MY LORD.

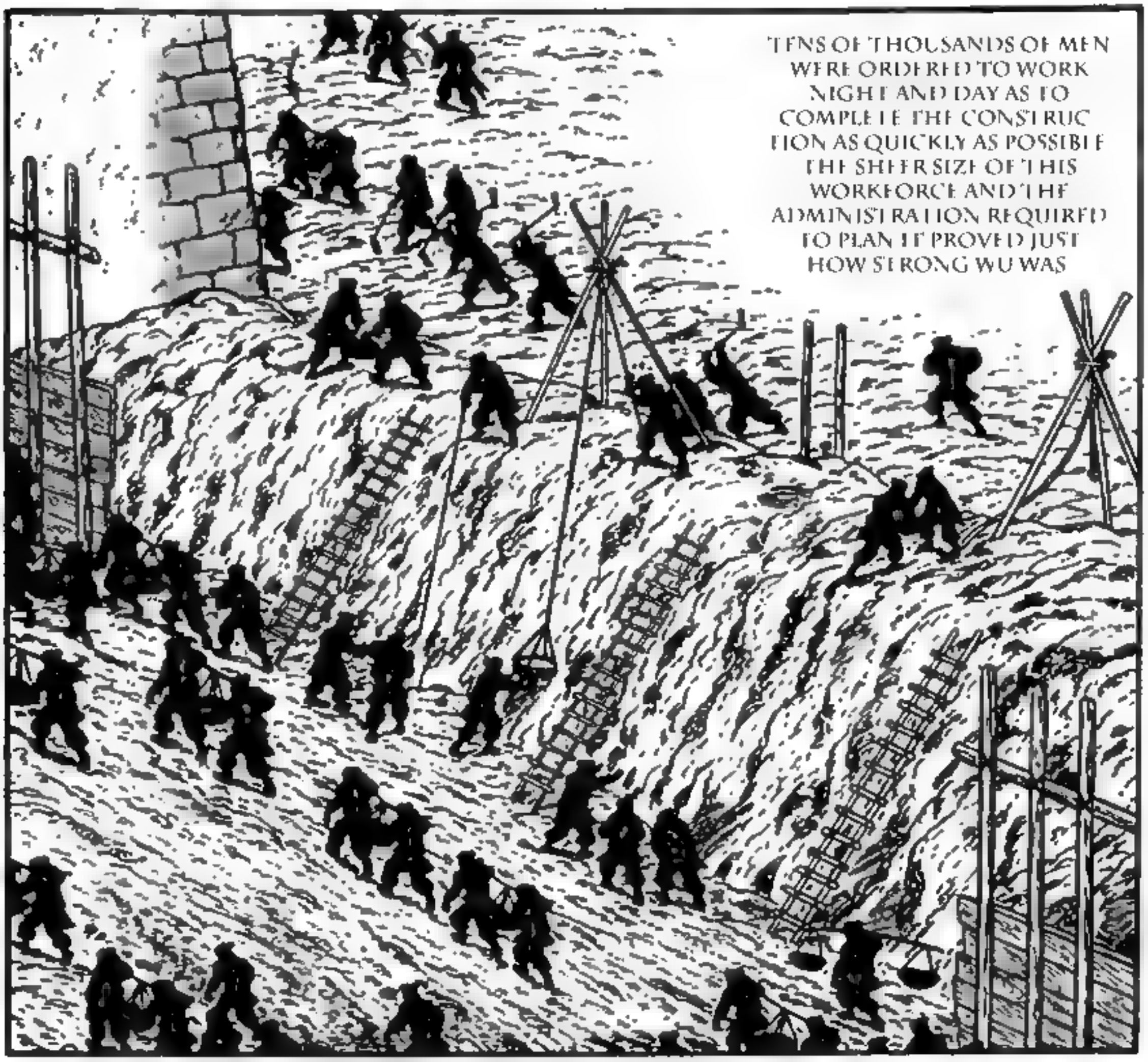
YES, GOOD IDEA.

TO BETTER DEFEND AGAINST CAO CAO'S INVASION, I SUGGEST A FORTRESS TO BE BUILT AT RUXU RIVER.

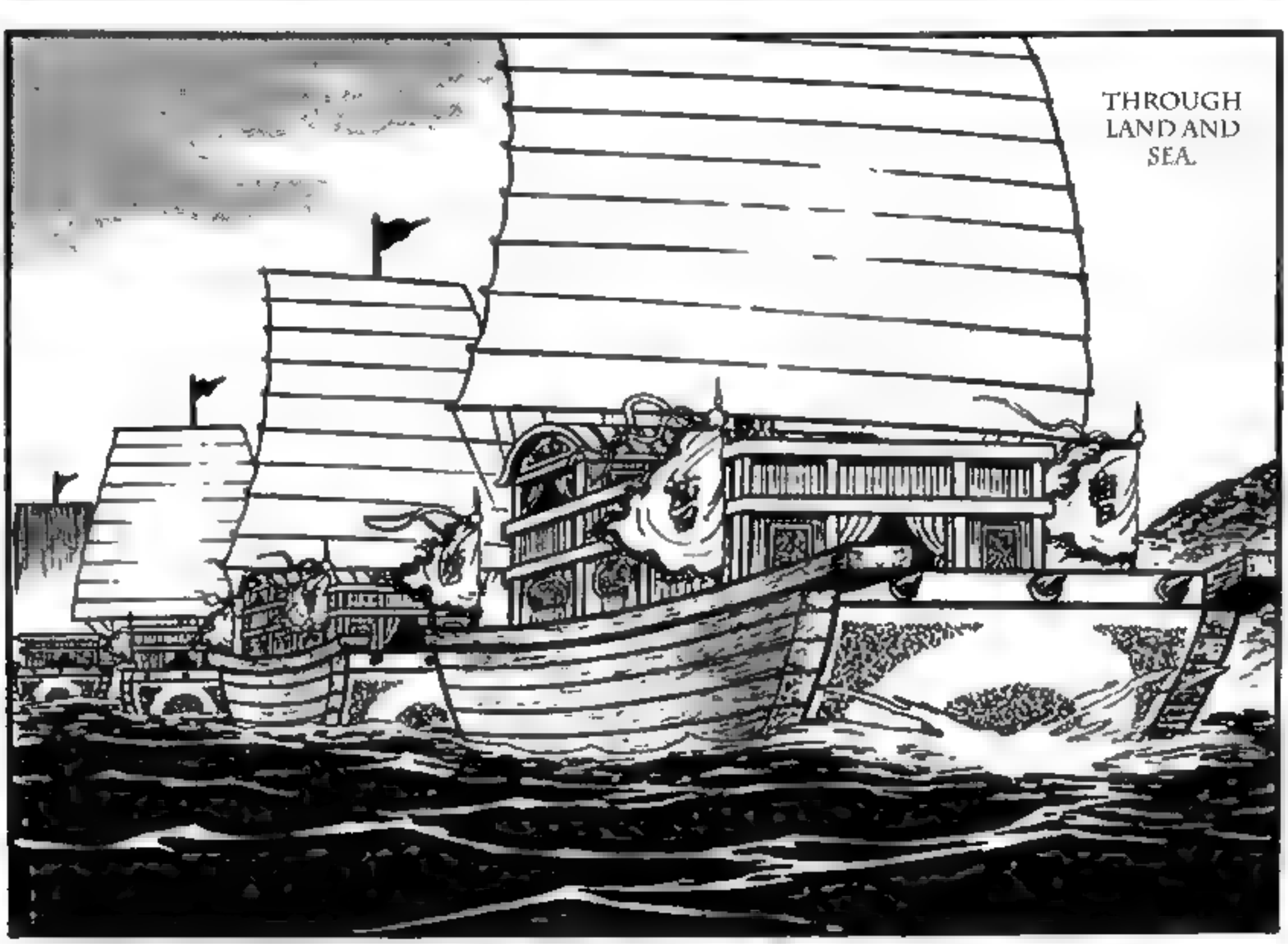
PLEASE START WORK ON THE FORTRESS AS WELL IMMEDIATELY!

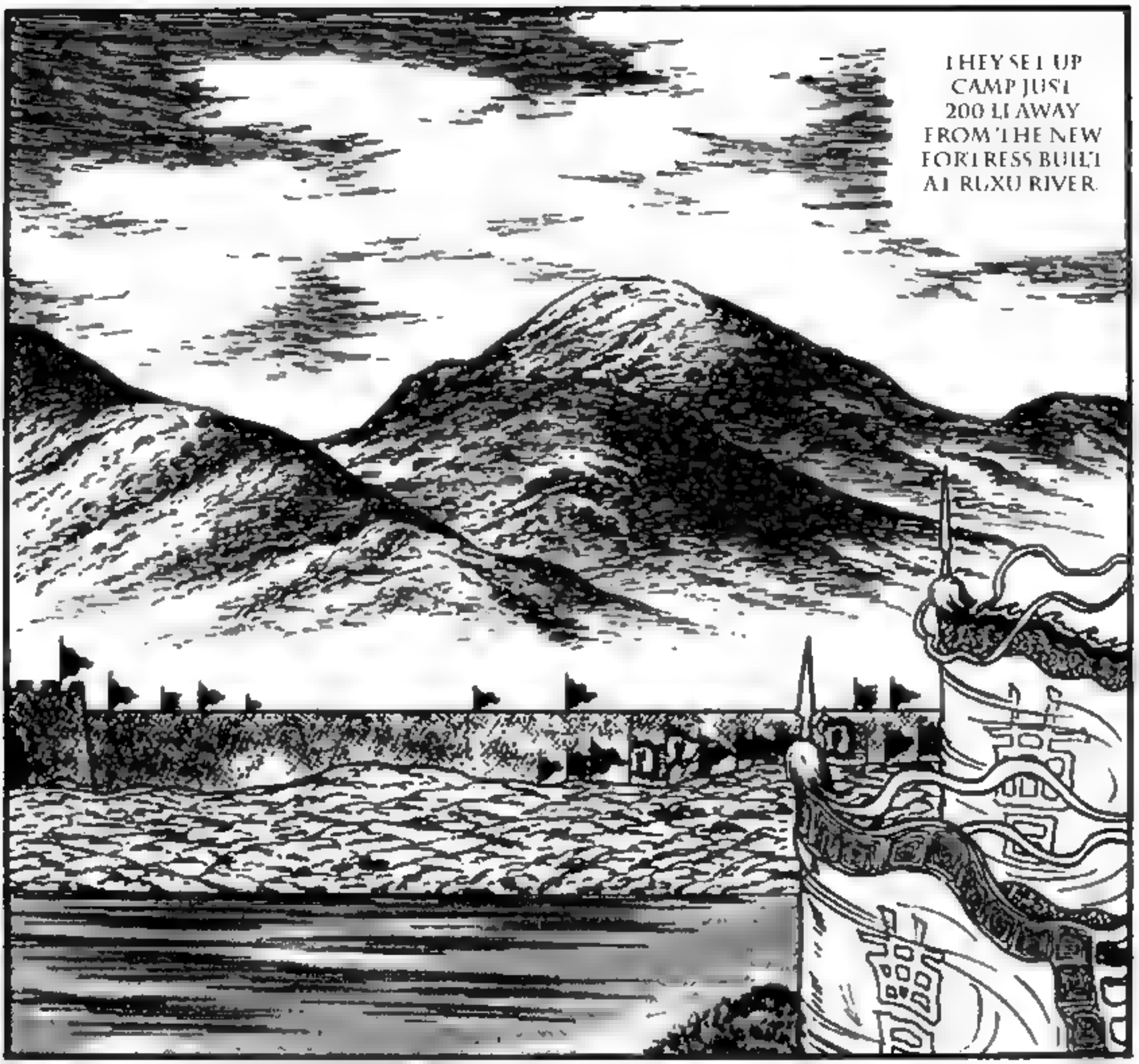
AND SO AT MOLING, STURDY WALLS WERE BUILT FROM STONE.

WHILE AT RUXU RIVER, WALLS WERE BUILT WITH RAMMED EARTH

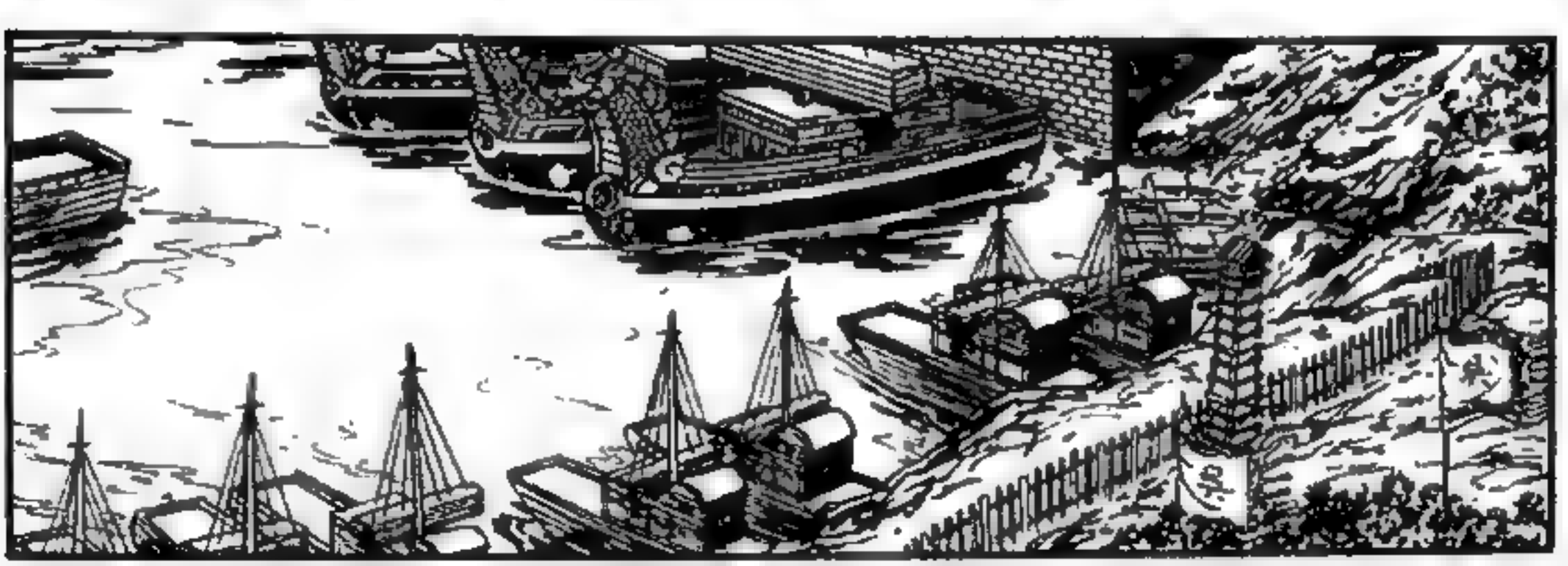

TENS OF THOUSANDS OF MEN WERE ORDERED TO WORK NIGHT AND DAY AS TO COMPLETE THE CONSTRUCTION AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE THE SHEER SIZE OF THIS WORKFORCE AND THE ADMINISTRATION REQUIRED TO PLAN IT PROVED JUST HOW STRONG WU WAS

MEANWHILE, CAO CAO'S ARMY WAS APPROACHING THE SOUTHLANDS.


THROUGH LAND AND SEA.


THEY SET UP
CAMP JUST
200 LI AWAY
FROM THE NEW
FORTRESS BUILT
AT RUXU RIVER.

HMM, THEY'RE BETTER PREPARED THAN I THOUGHT THEY'D BE...



LEST I SUFFER THE SAME FATE AT RED CLIFFS AGAIN...

WITH SOLID DEFENCES ON BOTH LAND AND WATER, I MUST ATTACK CAUTIOUSLY.

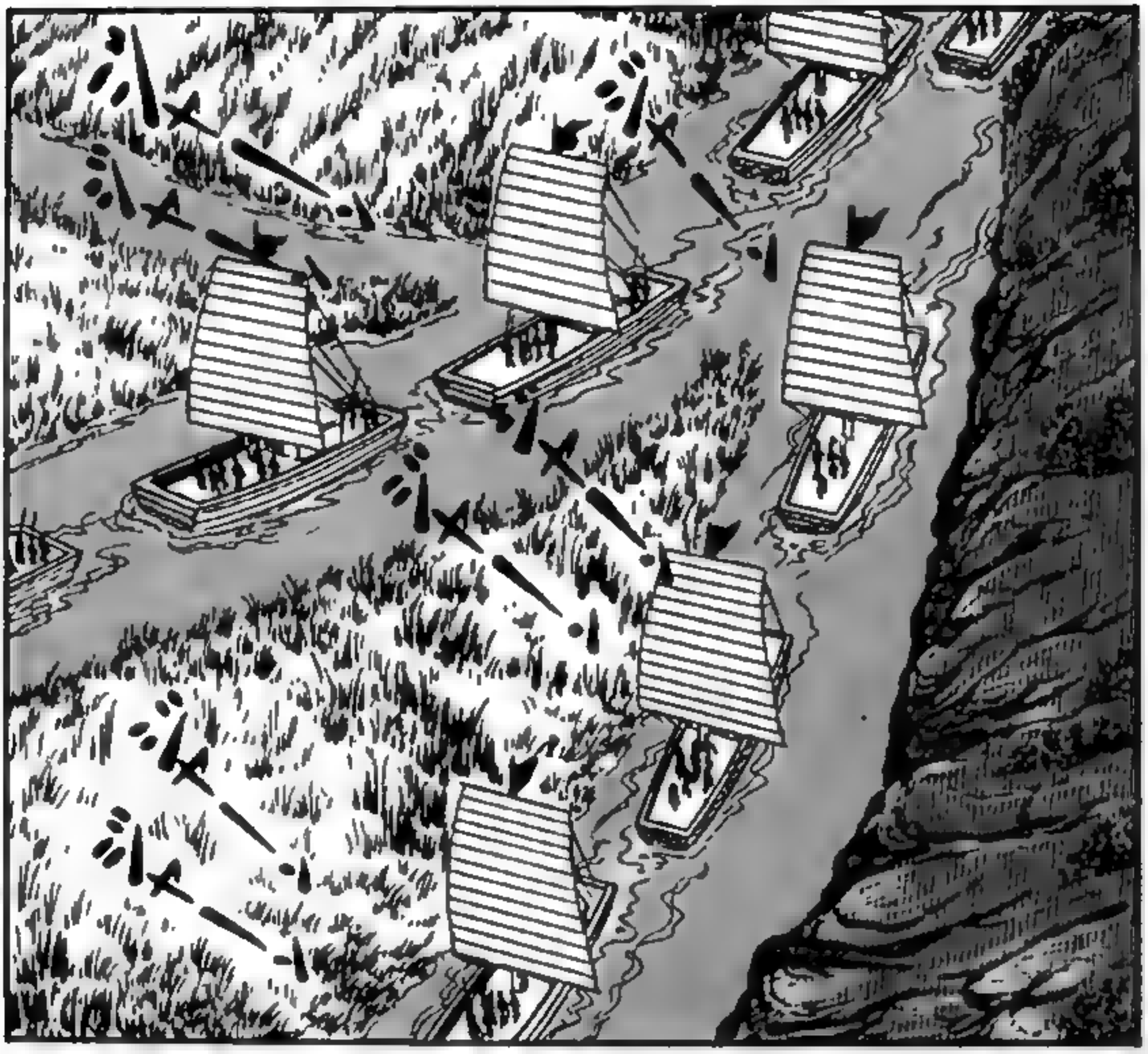
WHAT WAS THAT SOUND JUST NOW?

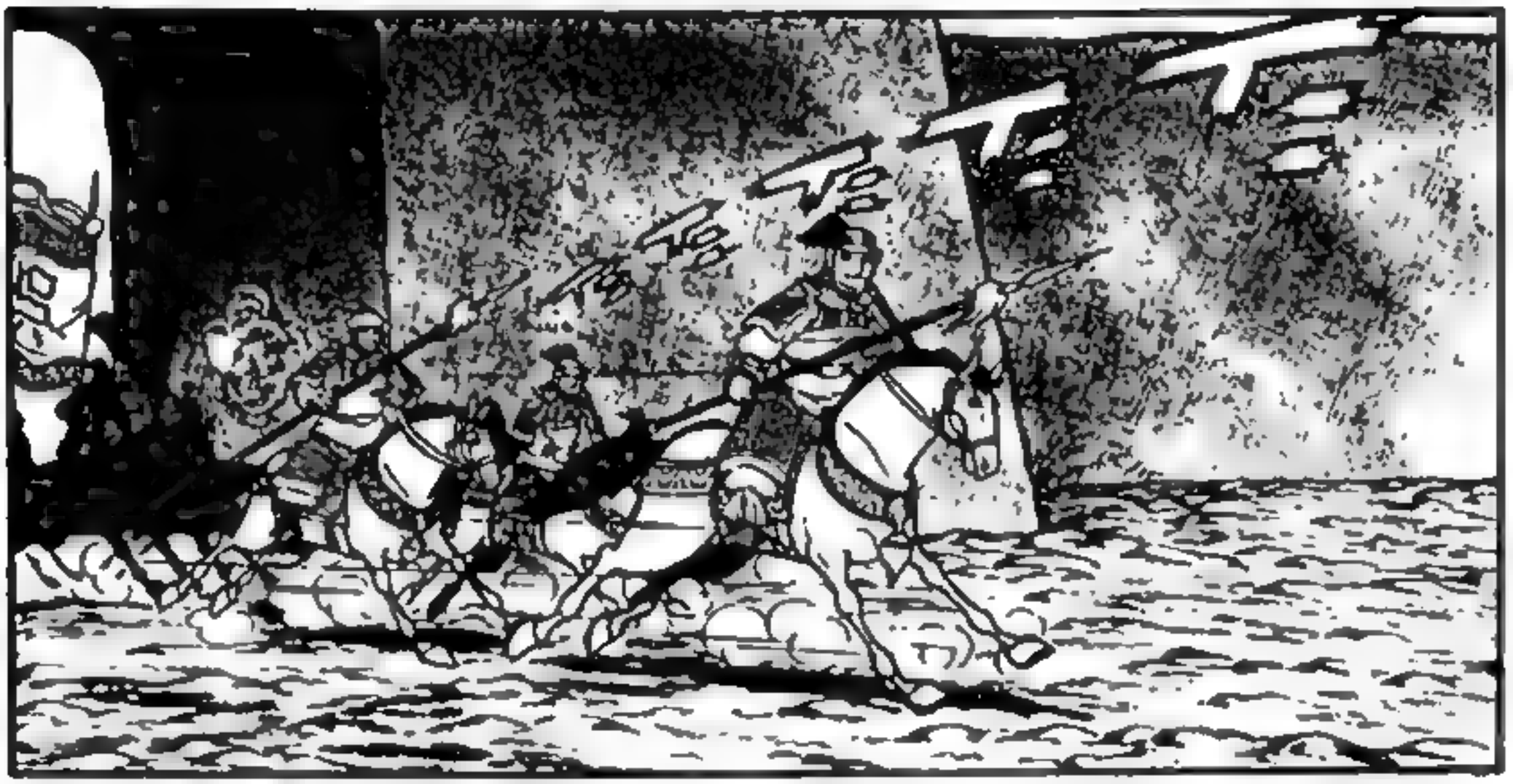
HM?

I DO NOT KNOW.

AHH!

CHANCELLOR! I THINK IT WAS THE ENEMY'S ATTACK SIGNAL!



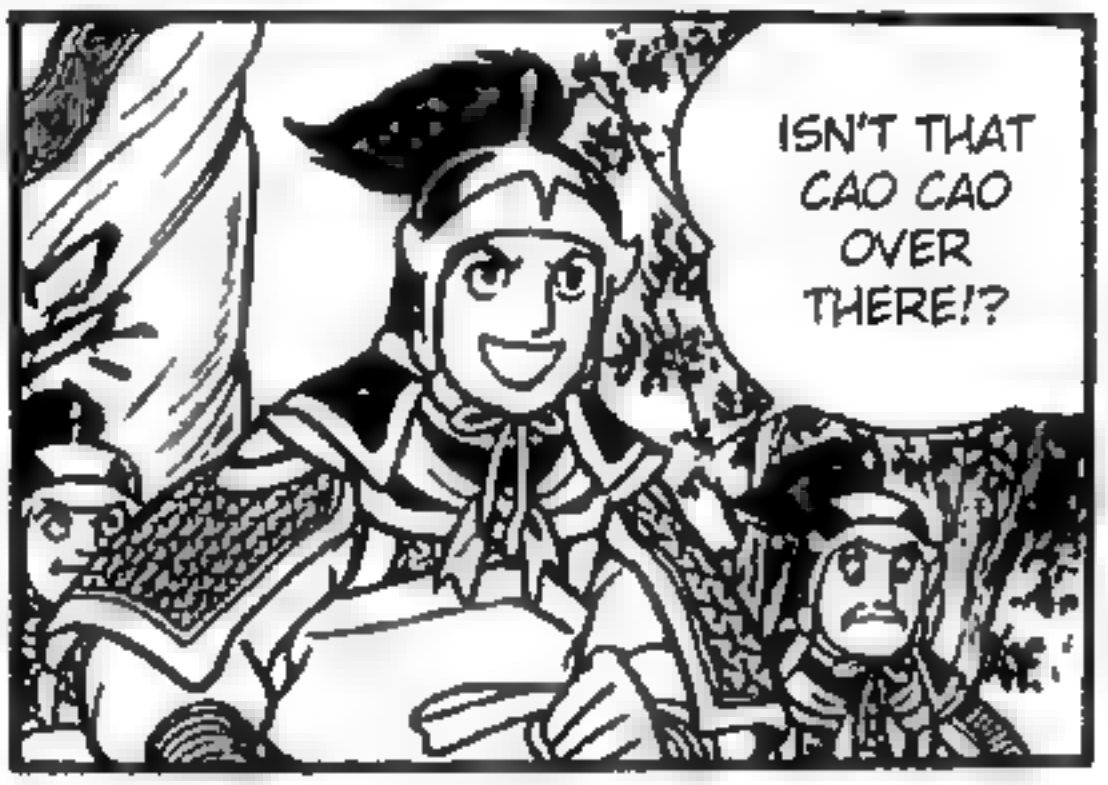


WE MUST RETURN TO CAMP AT ONCE!

HM!?

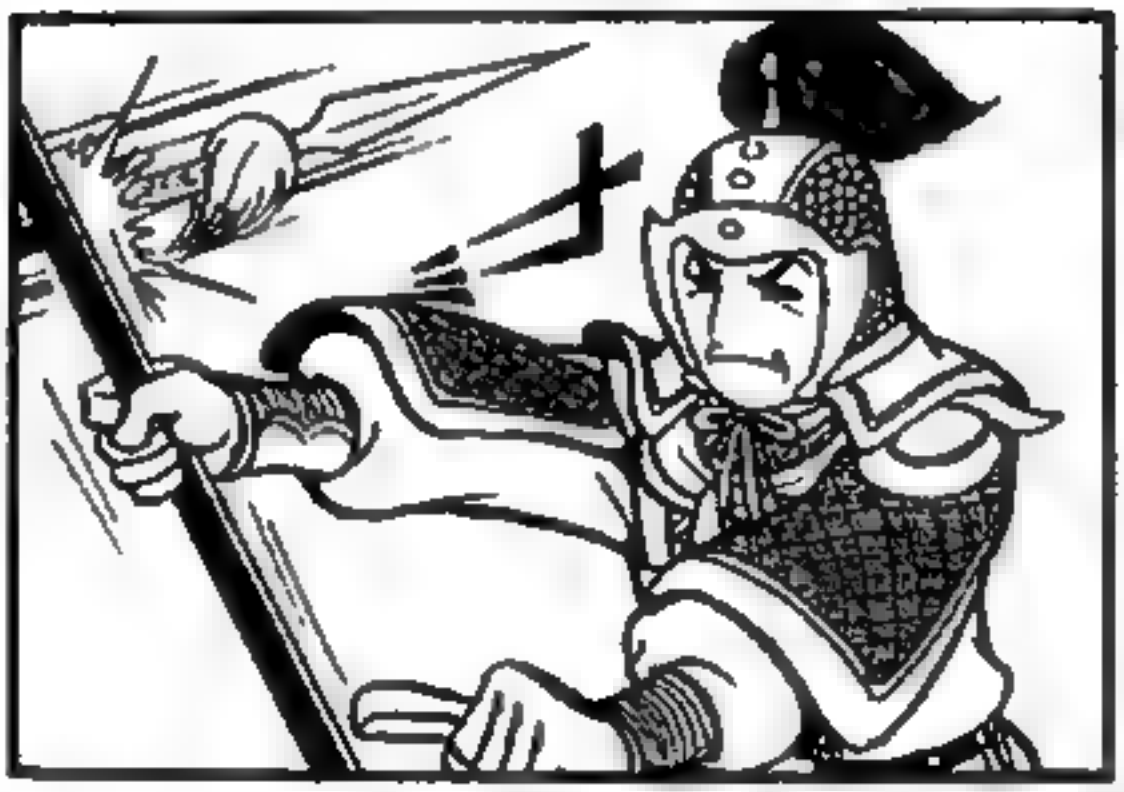
AH!

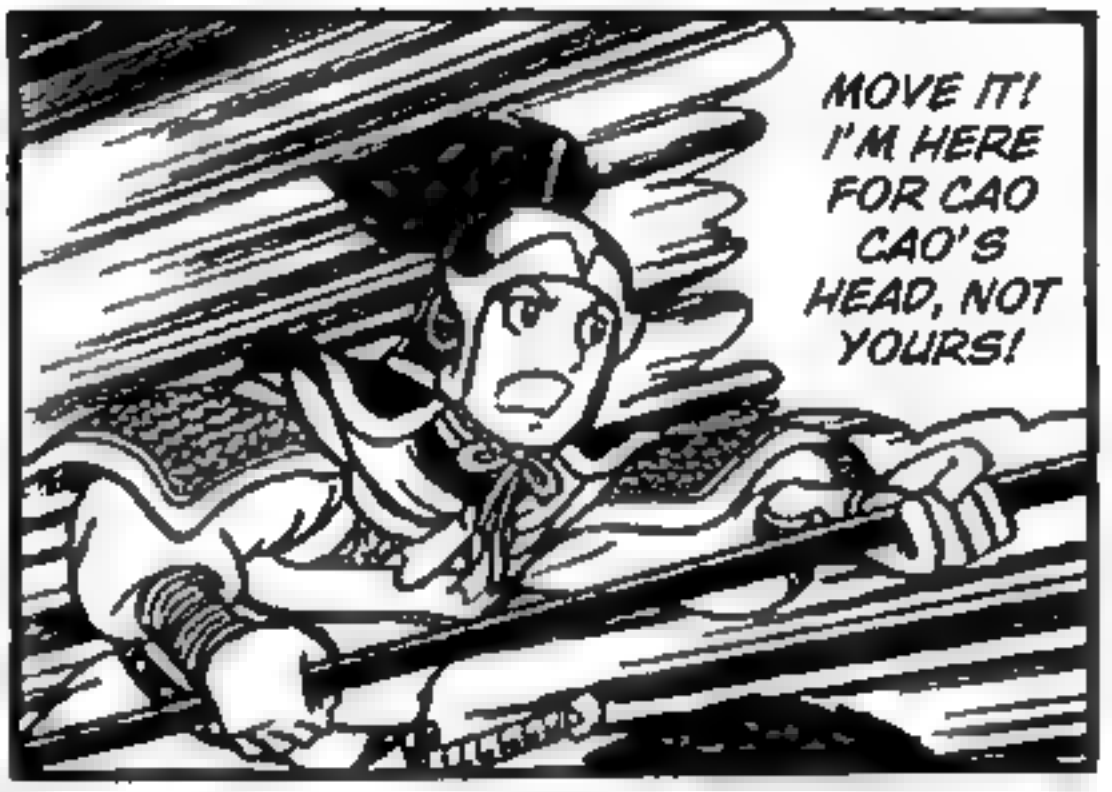
YOUR HEAD IS MINE!

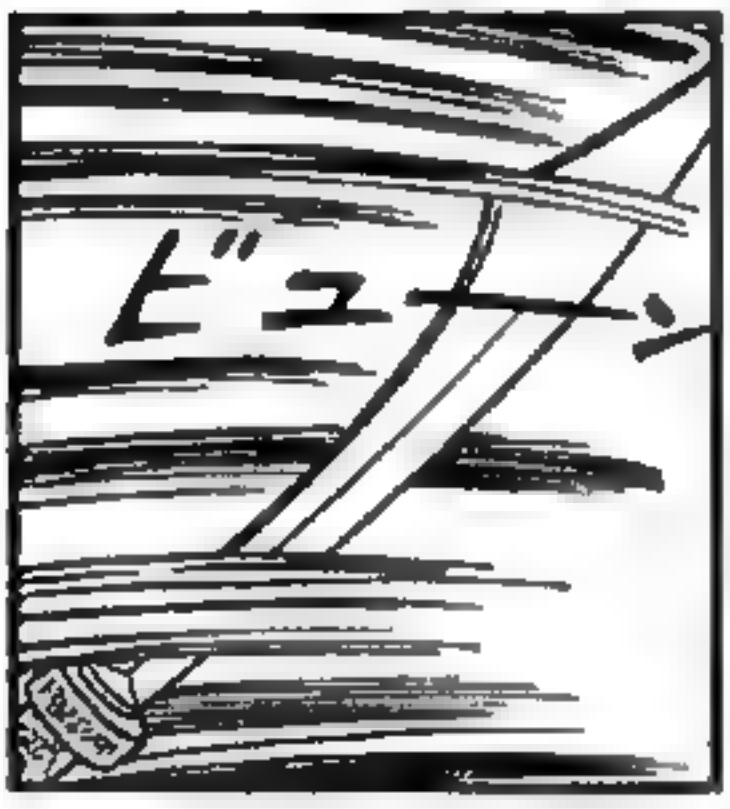

ISN'T THAT CAO CAO OVER THERE!?

XU CHU SHALL GLADLY DEAL WITH YOU!

THANK YOU.
WE'LL HOLD THEM OFF SO PLEASE RETURN TO OUR CAMP, CHANCELLOR!




MOVE IT! I'M HERE FOR CAO CAO'S HEAD, NOT YOURS!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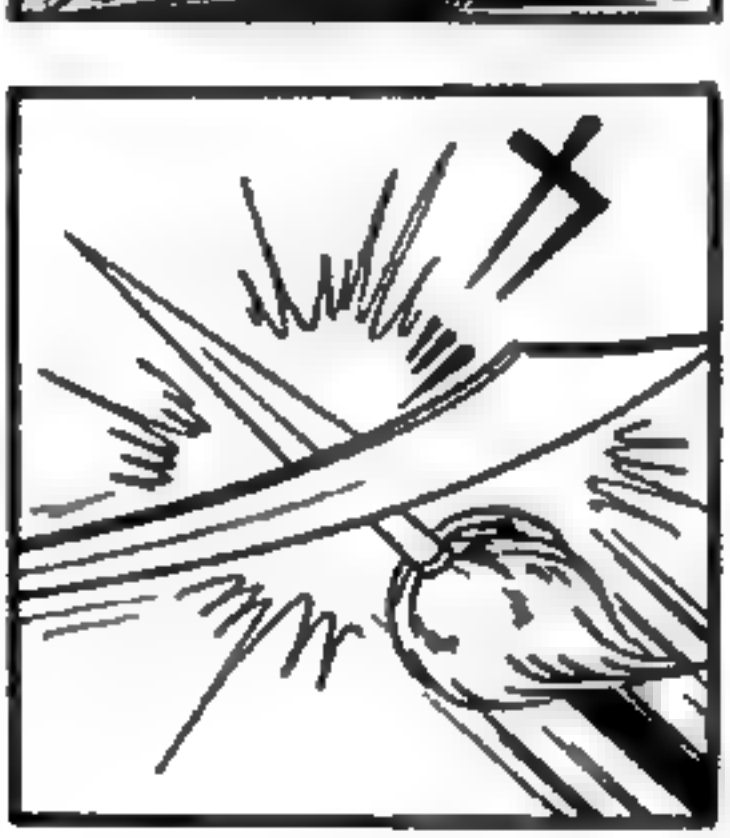
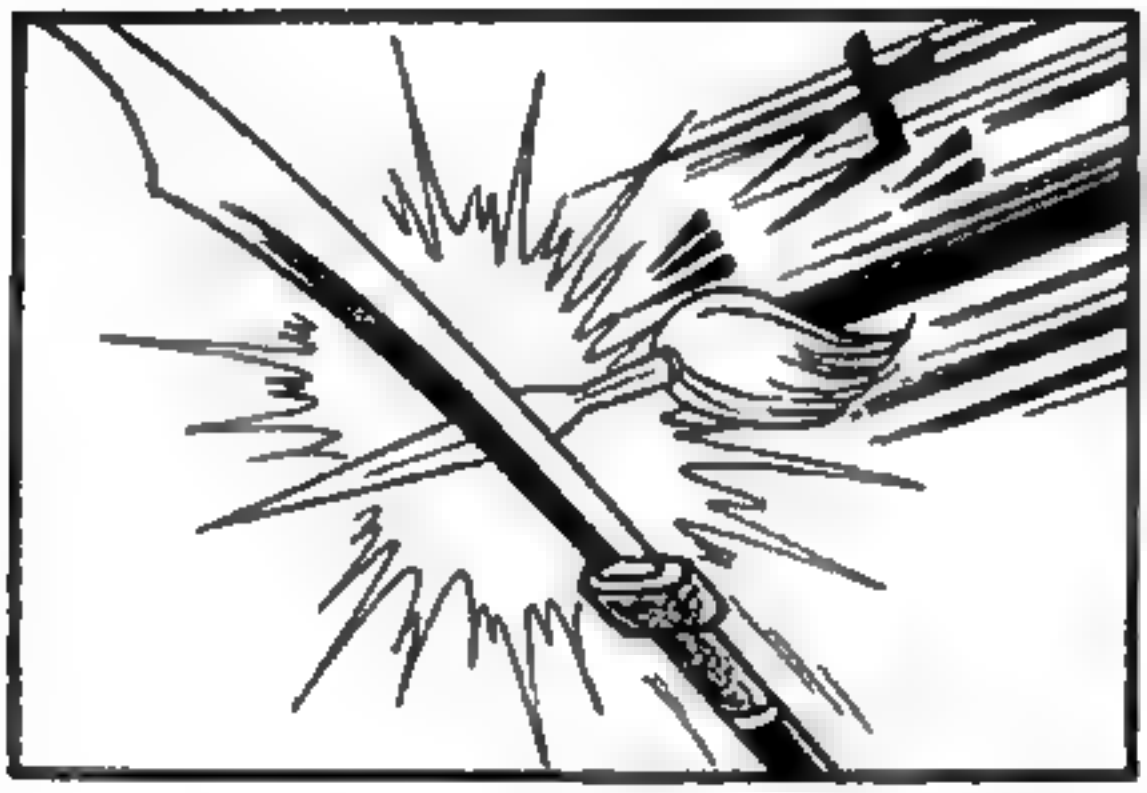
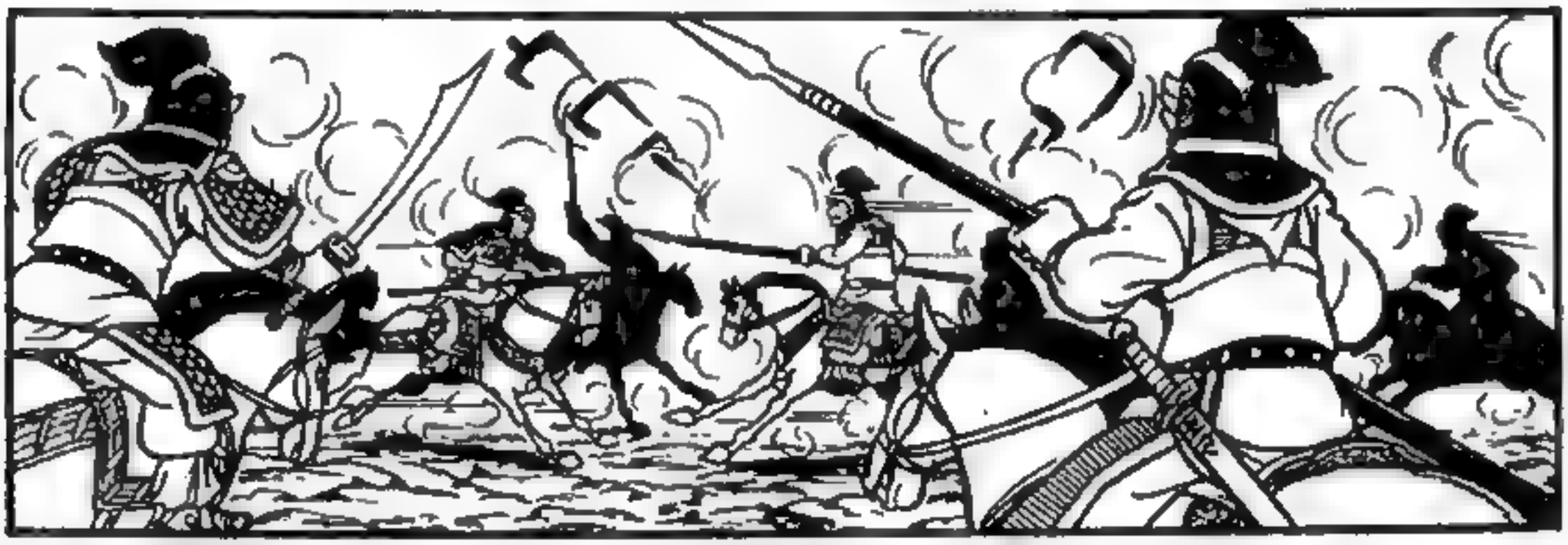
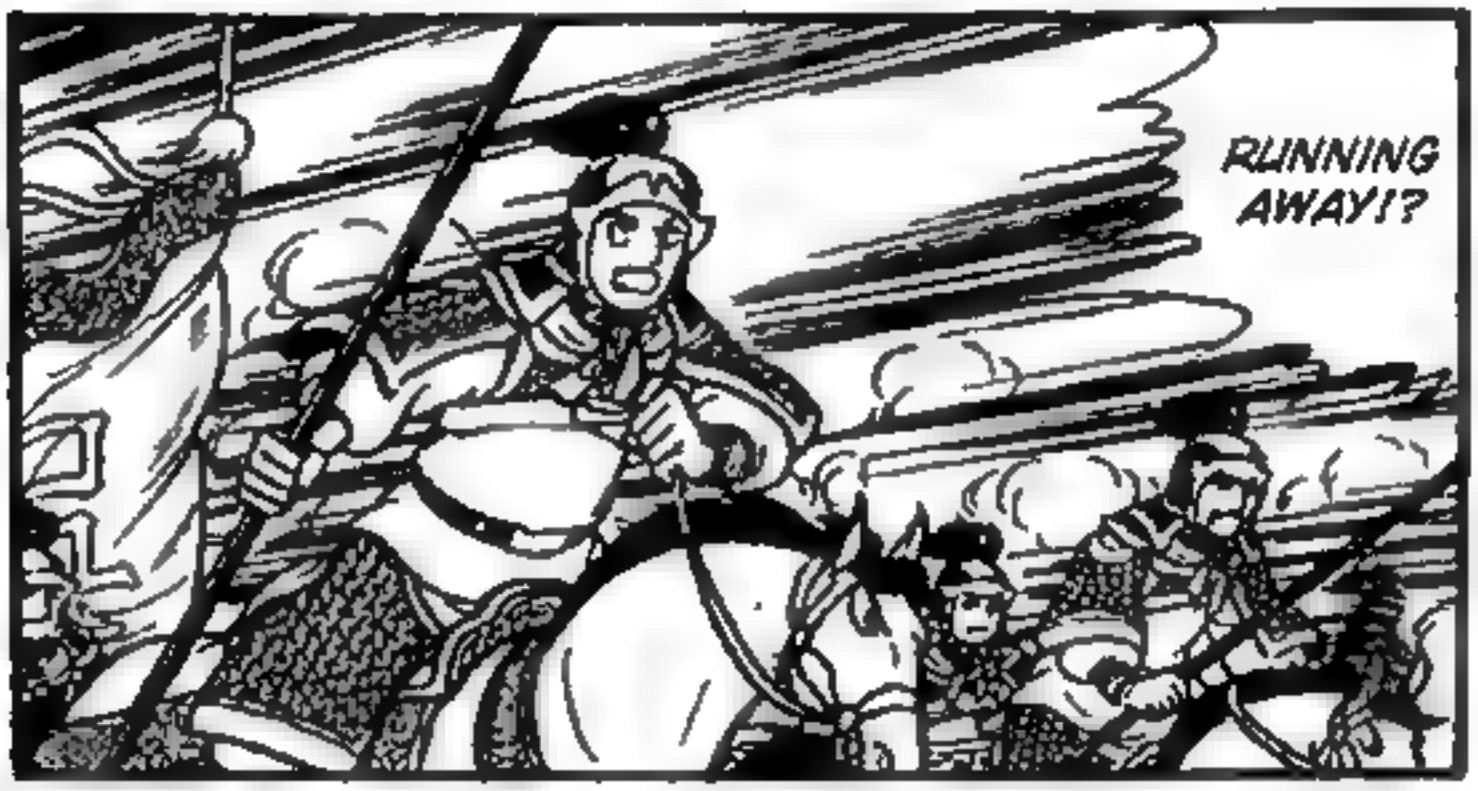






THAT'S ENOUGH, MEN! IT IS TIME FOR US TO FALL BACK TOO!

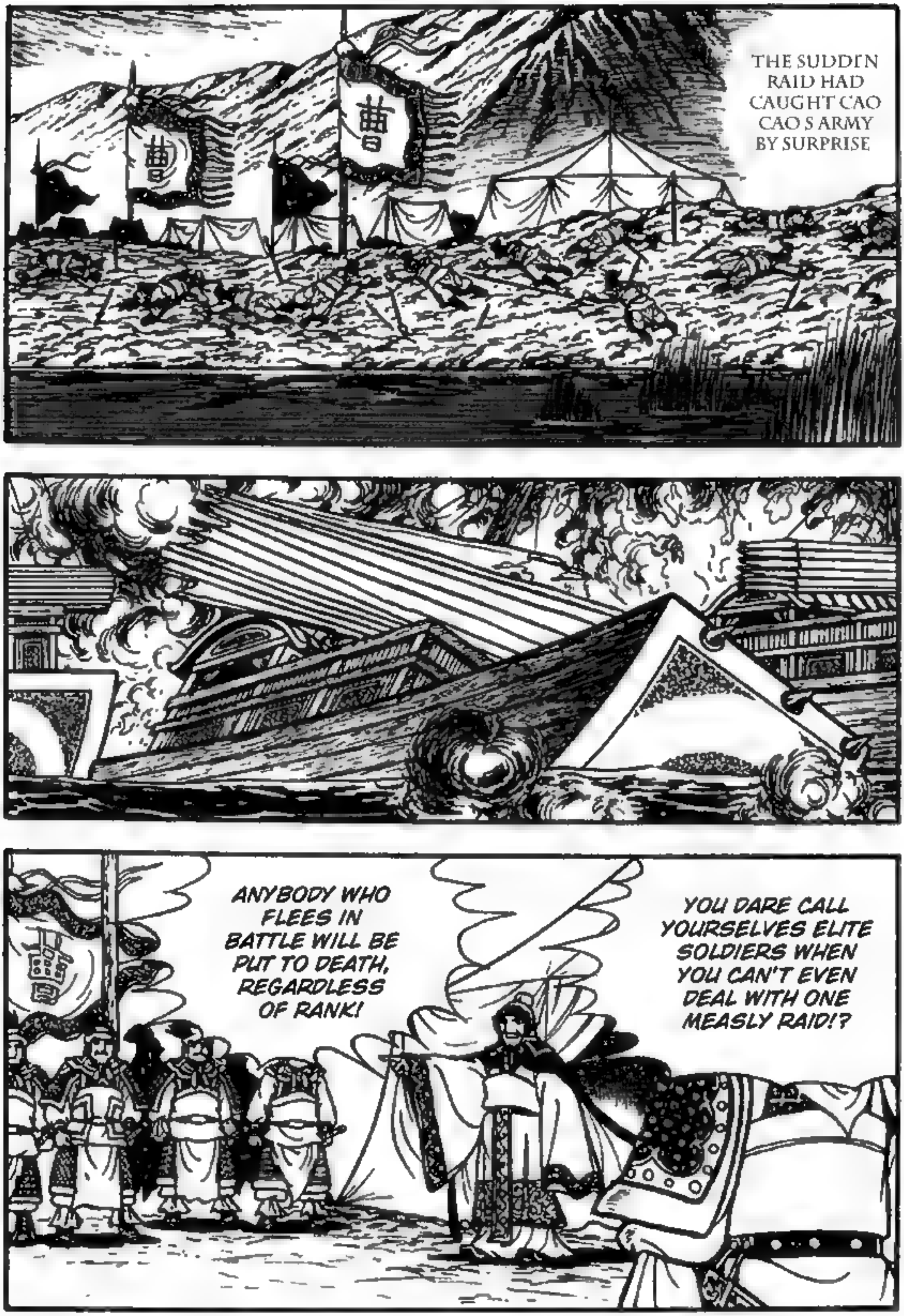

RUNNING AWAY!?

IT'S OUR SIGNAL TO RETREAT!

AH!

CURSE THOSE LUCKY COWARDS!

FALL BACK, MEN!


THE SUDDEN RAID HAD CAUGHT CAO CAO'S ARMY BY SURPRISE
ANYBODY WHO FLEES IN BATTLE WILL BE PUT TO DEATH, REGARDLESS OF RANK!
YOU DARE CALL YOURSELVES ELITE SOLDIERS WHEN YOU CAN'T EVEN DEAL WITH ONE MEASLY RAID!?

HM?

IT APPEARS TO BE AN ENEMY RAID!

WHAT'S GOING ON OUT THERE!?

WHAT!?

AHHH!

THE ENEMIES HAVE SET FIRE TO OUR CAMPS AND SUPPLIES!

SIR!

WE MUST RETREAT AT ONCE!

MMN...

CHANCELLOR! ENEMY TROOPS ARE ALMOST ALREADY HERE!

HMM...

WITH THEIR FORTRESS AND NAVY, THEY'LL BE ABLE TO EASILY RAID US AT WILL IF WE CONTINUE TO STAY HERE. WE MUST RETREAT!

YES, SIR!

FINE! GIVE THE SIGNAL TO RETREAT 50 LI!

FALL BACK!

RETREAT!
RETREAT!

ONCE AGAIN, CAO CAO S ARMY SUFFERED A DEVASTATING LOSS,

AND RETREATED 50 LI BACK AFTER LOSING THOU- SANDS OF MEN.

THE TWO SUNS

FOR SEVERAL DAYS SINCE, CAO CAO SPENT HIS DAY IN DEPRESSING INACTIVITY

THE REASON WAS HE REALIZED THERE WAS NO EASY WAY TO PENETRATE WU'S SOLID DEFENCES.

TO THINK WU HAD GROWN THIS POWERFUL IN SUCH A SHORT TIME...

SIGH...

NO MATTER HOW MUCH I THINK, I CAN'T COME UP WITH A GOOD PLAN.

AFTER COMING SOUTH INTENT ON CONQUEST, IT'S PITIFUL HOW I CAN BARELY DEFEND MYSELF NOW...

YES, VERY MUCH SO, CHENG YU.

TIRED, CHANCELLOR?

YES...

I'M AFRAID WE'VE TOOK TOO LONG TO MOBILIZE THIS TIME. SUN QUAN HAD PLENTY OF TIME TO PREPARE AND BUILD A NEW FORTRESS HERE AT RUXU RIVER.

WITHDRAW ALREADY!? BUT I HAVEN'T ACHIEVED A THING!

WHAT DOES THE CHANCELLOR THINK OF WITHDRAWING FOR NOW AND BIDING FOR A BETTER TIME?

FINE, I'LL THINK ABOUT IT.

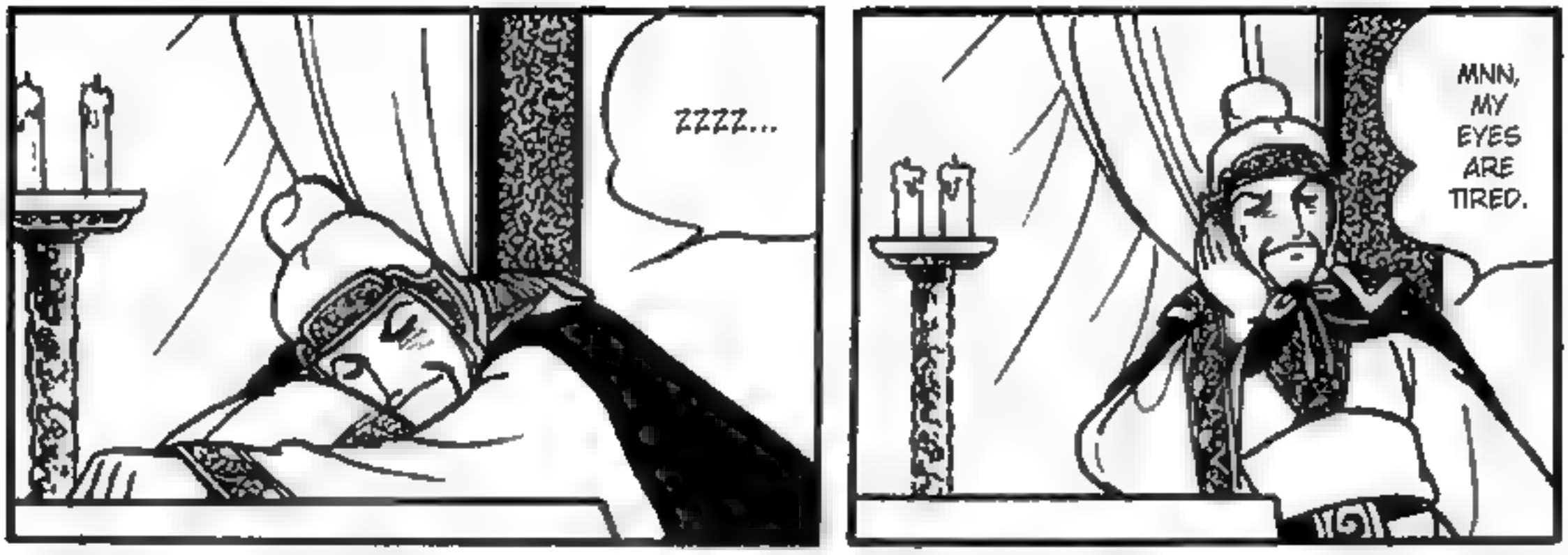
HMM...

AS A MAN WELL VERSED IN THE ART OF WAR, YOU KNOW JUST HOW COSTLY ATTACKING A WELL DEFENDED POSITION IS.

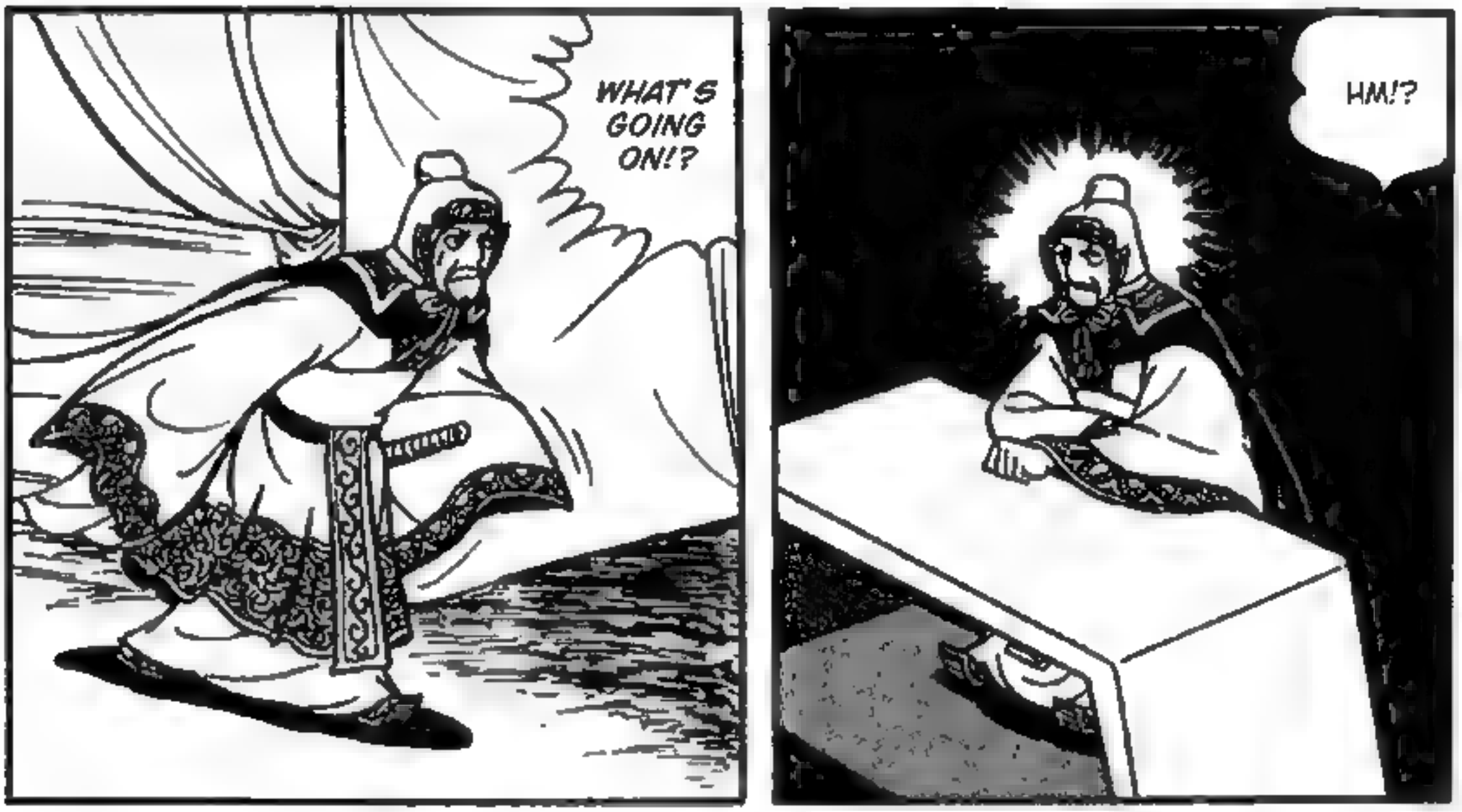
THAT WOULD BE WISE.

HOW COULD I MAKE SUCH A BASIC MISTAKE...

THEY SAY SWIFTNESS IS SUPREMACY IN WAR. MY CAMPAIGN THIS TIME FORGOT TO TAKE THIS MAXIM INTO ACCOUNT.


ZZZZ...
MNN, MY EYES ARE TIRED.

PERHUMMBLE


WHAT'S GOING ON!?
HM!?

THE SUN IS RISING FROM THE RIVER...!?

W-WHAT'S GOING ON...!?

THE BATTLE OF RED CLIFFS

曹

I-IT'S FALLING THIS WAY!

AGHH!

N-NO, IT'S NOTHING.

IS SOMETHING THE MATTER, CHANCELLOR!?

?

DID MY DREAM JUST NOW PORTEND GOOD OR BAD FORTUNE...?

YES, SIR.
COME WITH ME.

I THINK THIS WAS THE PLACE I SAW IN MY DREAMS...

HM!?

AND YOU MUST BE SUN QUAN!

IS THAT CAO CAO BEFORE ME!?

SILENCE! YOU ARE BUT AN IMPUDENT REBEL WHO REFUSES TO OBEY THE IMPERIAL COURT'S AUTHORITY!

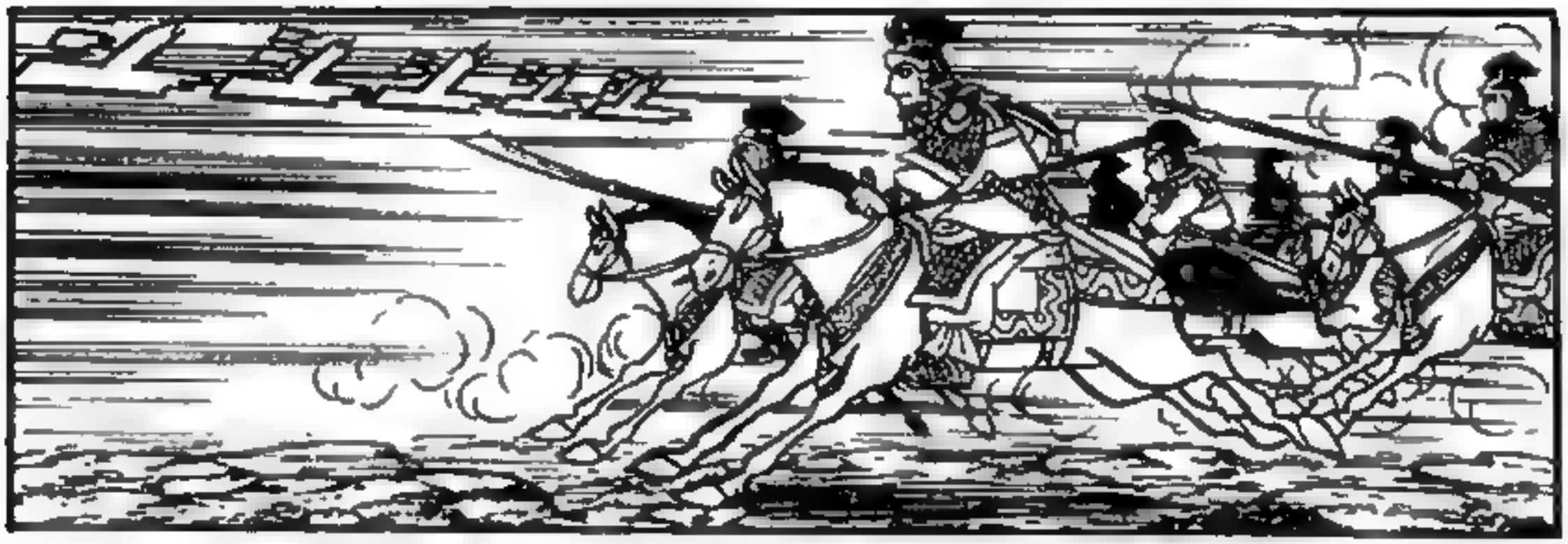
CAO CAO, HOW GREEDY MUST YOU BE THAT EVEN OWNING THE ENTIRE CENTRAL PLAINS OF CHINA IS NOT ENOUGH FOR YOU?

KILLING YOU WOULD BE THE MOST PATRIOTIC THING I CAN DO FOR HAN!

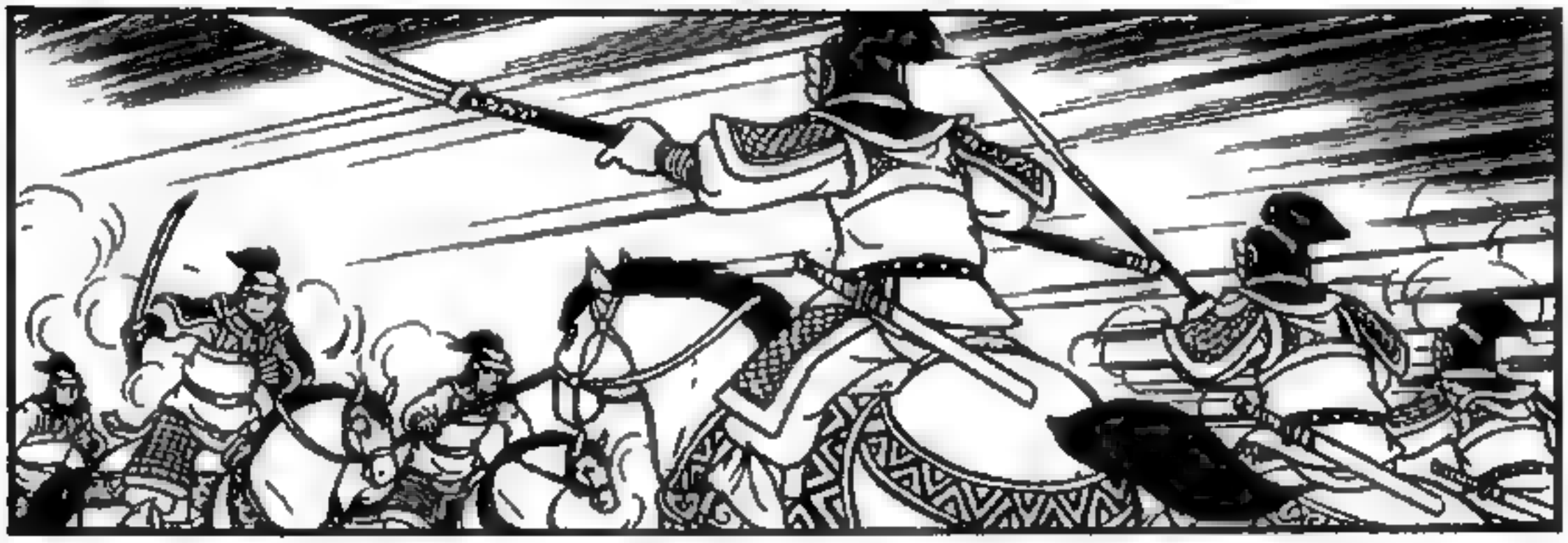
HA! EVEN A CHILD KNOWS THAT THE IMPERIAL COURT IS BUT A PUPPET STRUNG ALONG BY YOU!

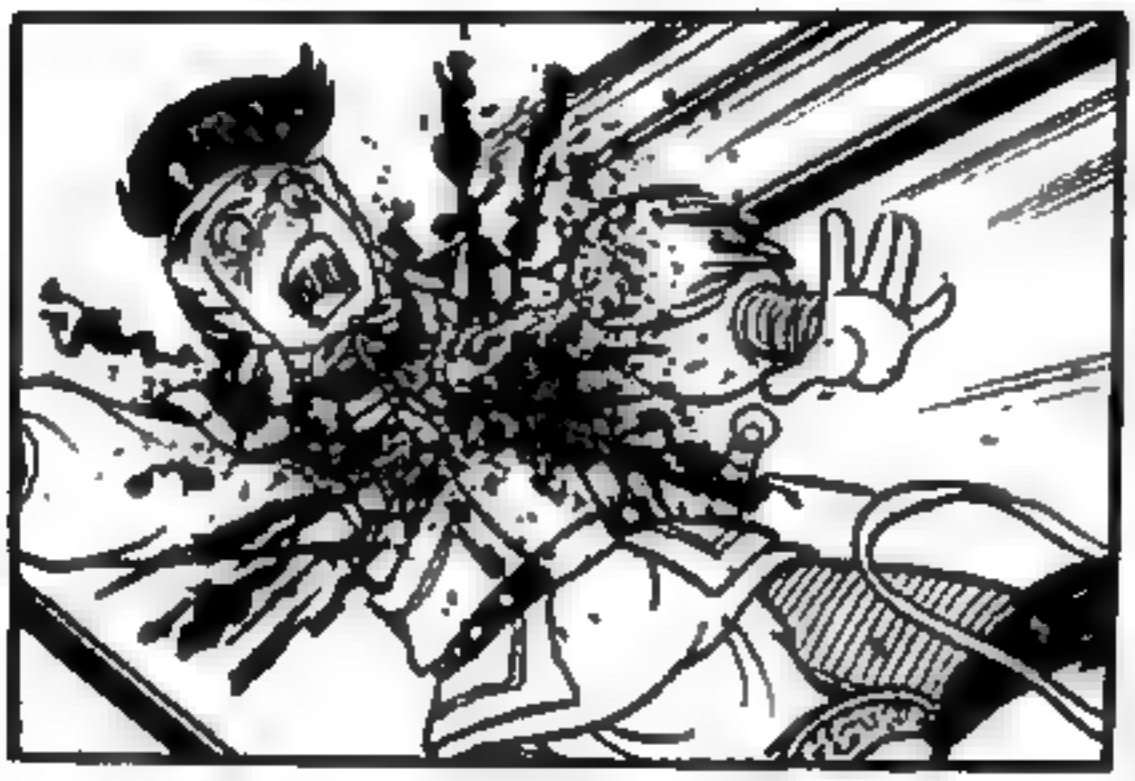
I WANT SUN QUAN CAPTURED ALIVE!

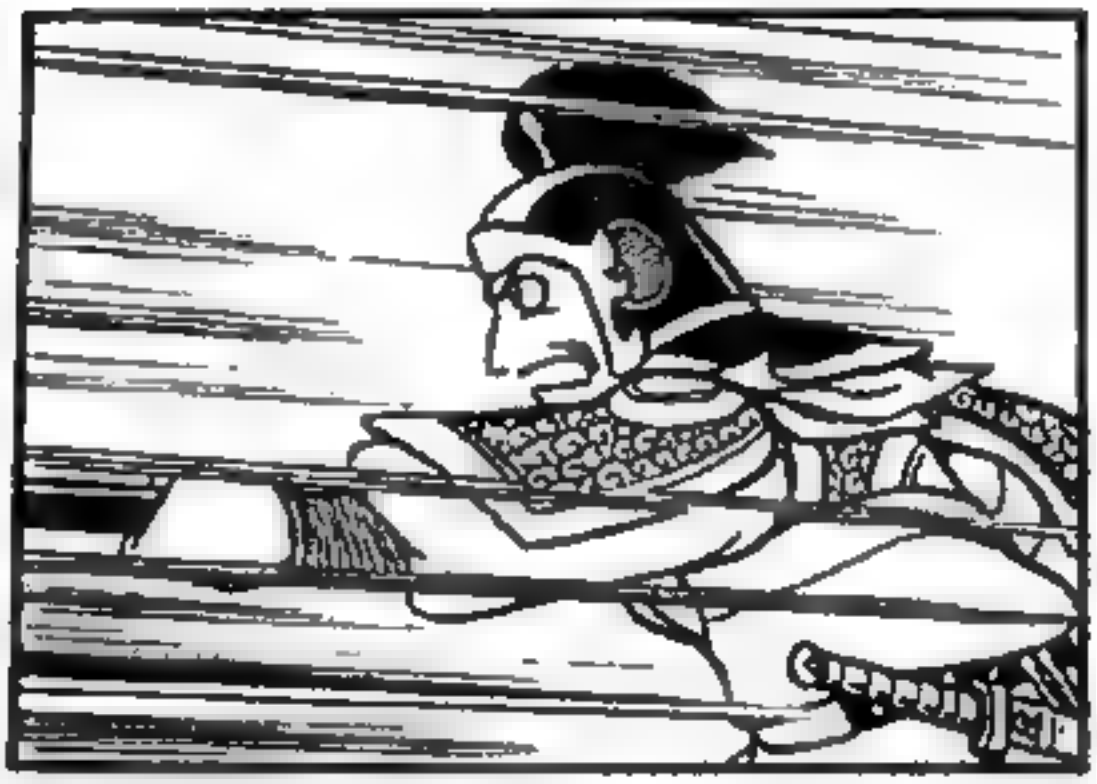
YOU ARROGANT LITTLE UPSTART!

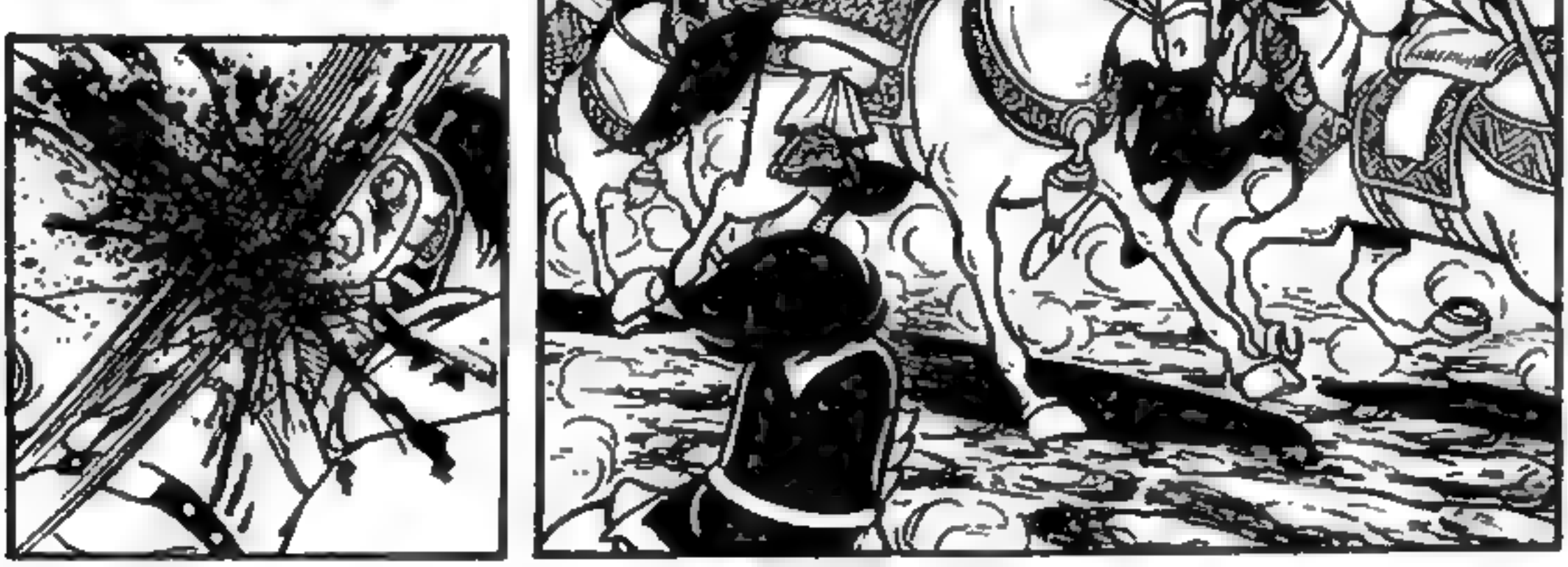


HAHA, IT SEEMS YOU'VE GROWN SENILE, OLD MAN.





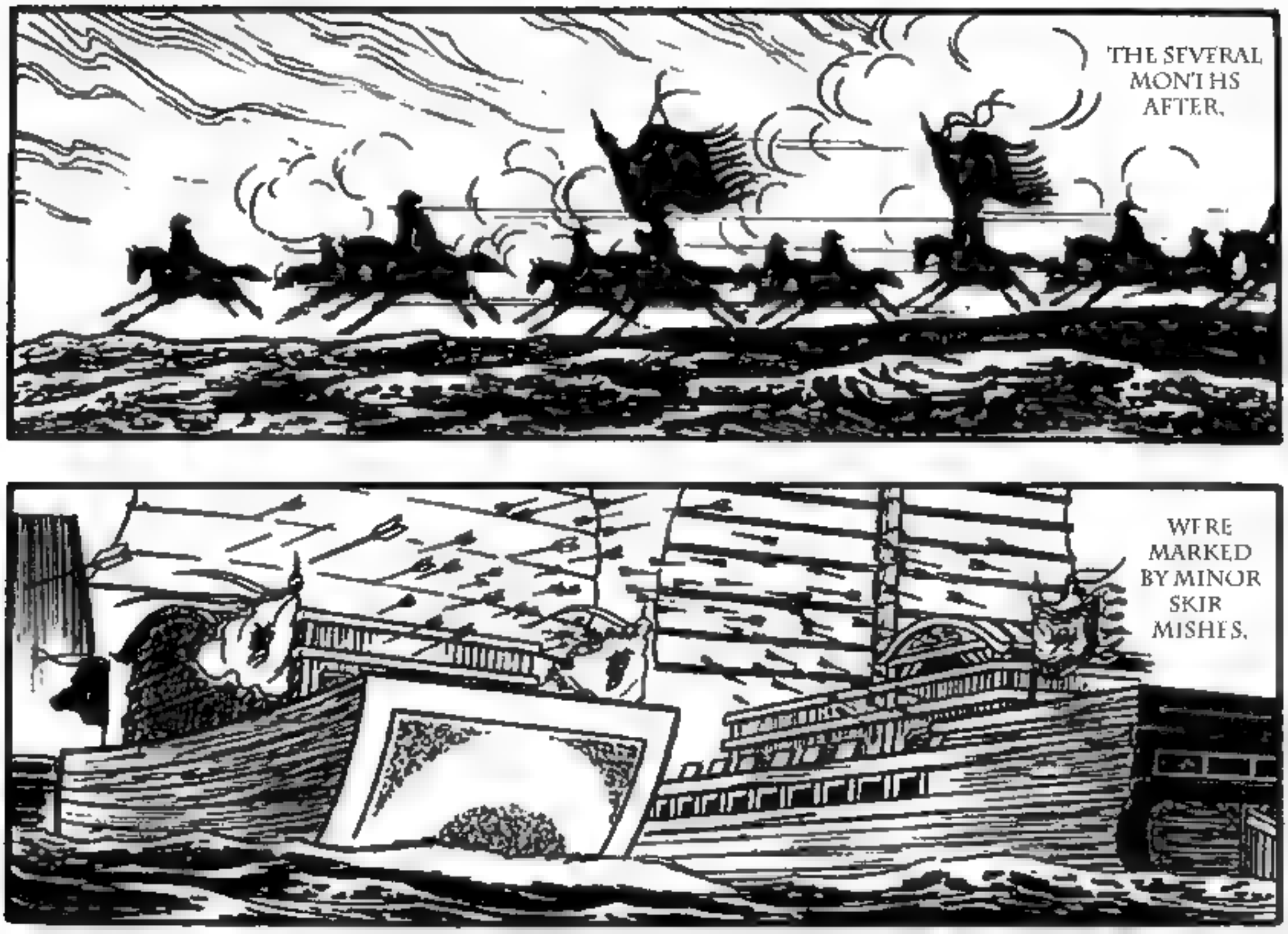


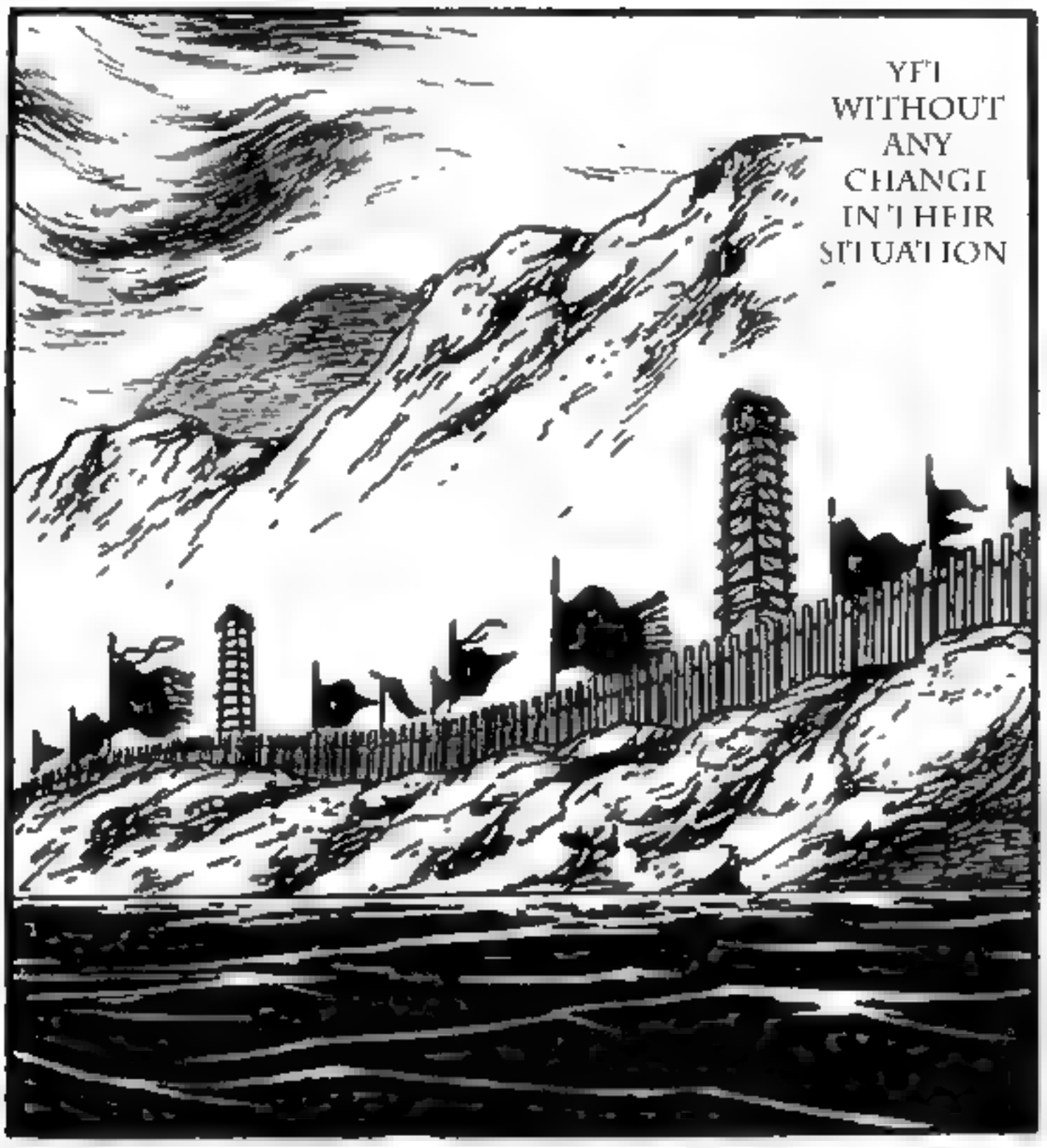


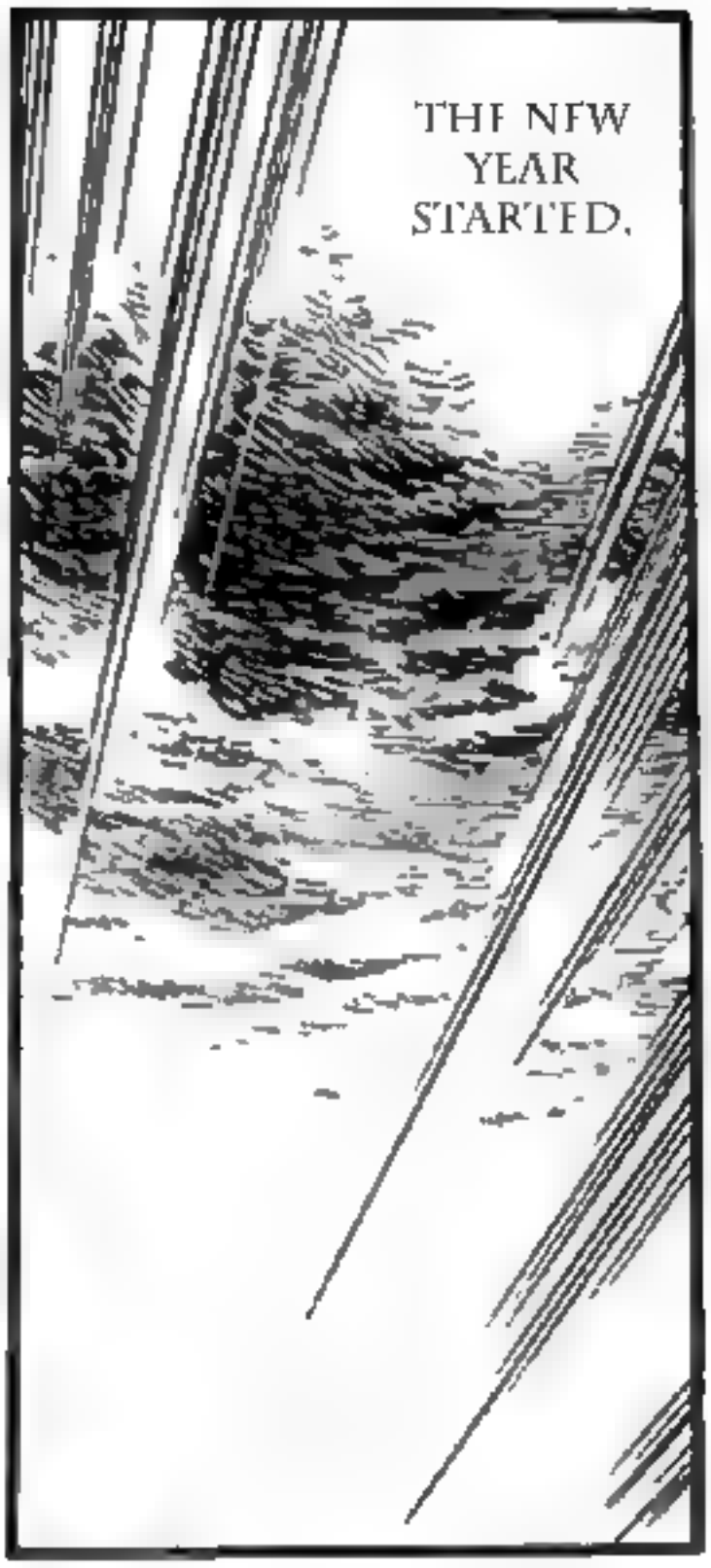
GIVE THE SIGNAL TO RETREAT BACK TO BASE!

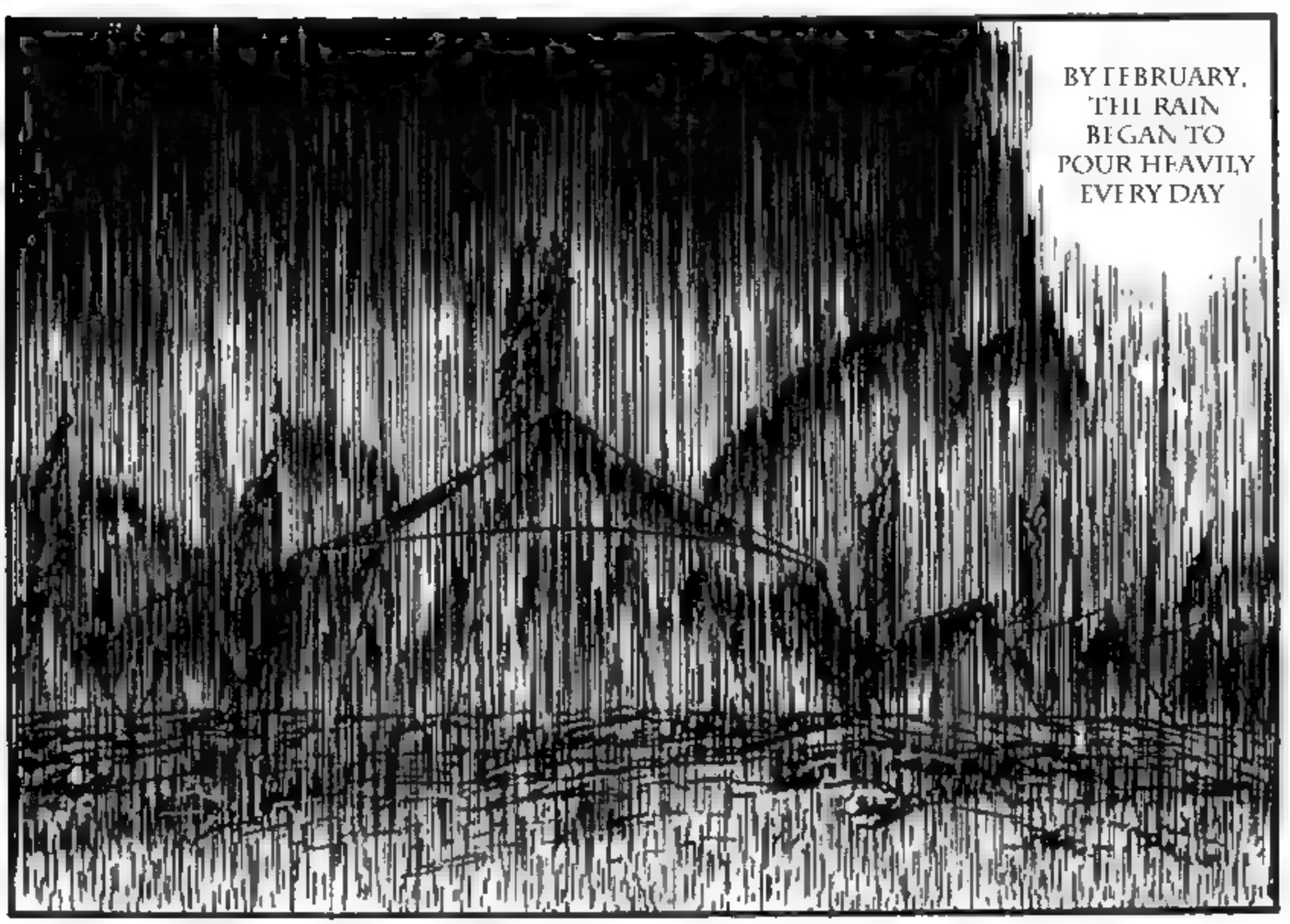
MN...

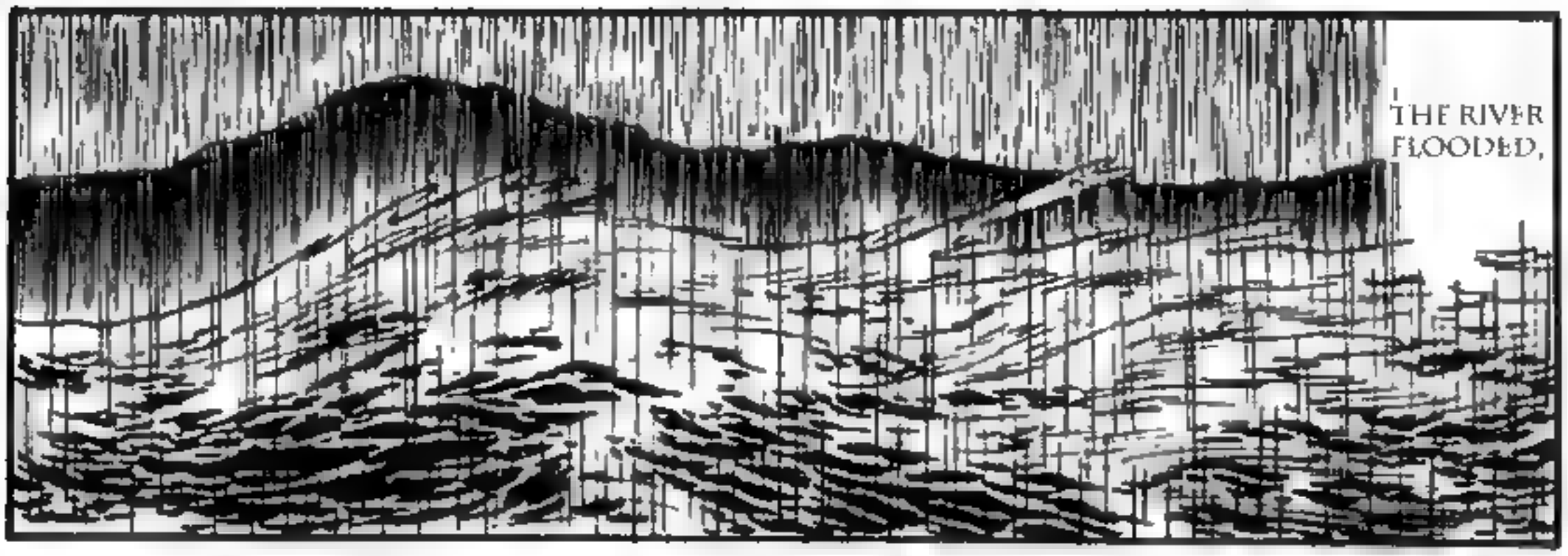
SIR, THE ENEMIES OUTNUMBER US SIGNIFICANTLY. WE'LL BE ANNHILATED IF WE KEEP ON FIGHTING!

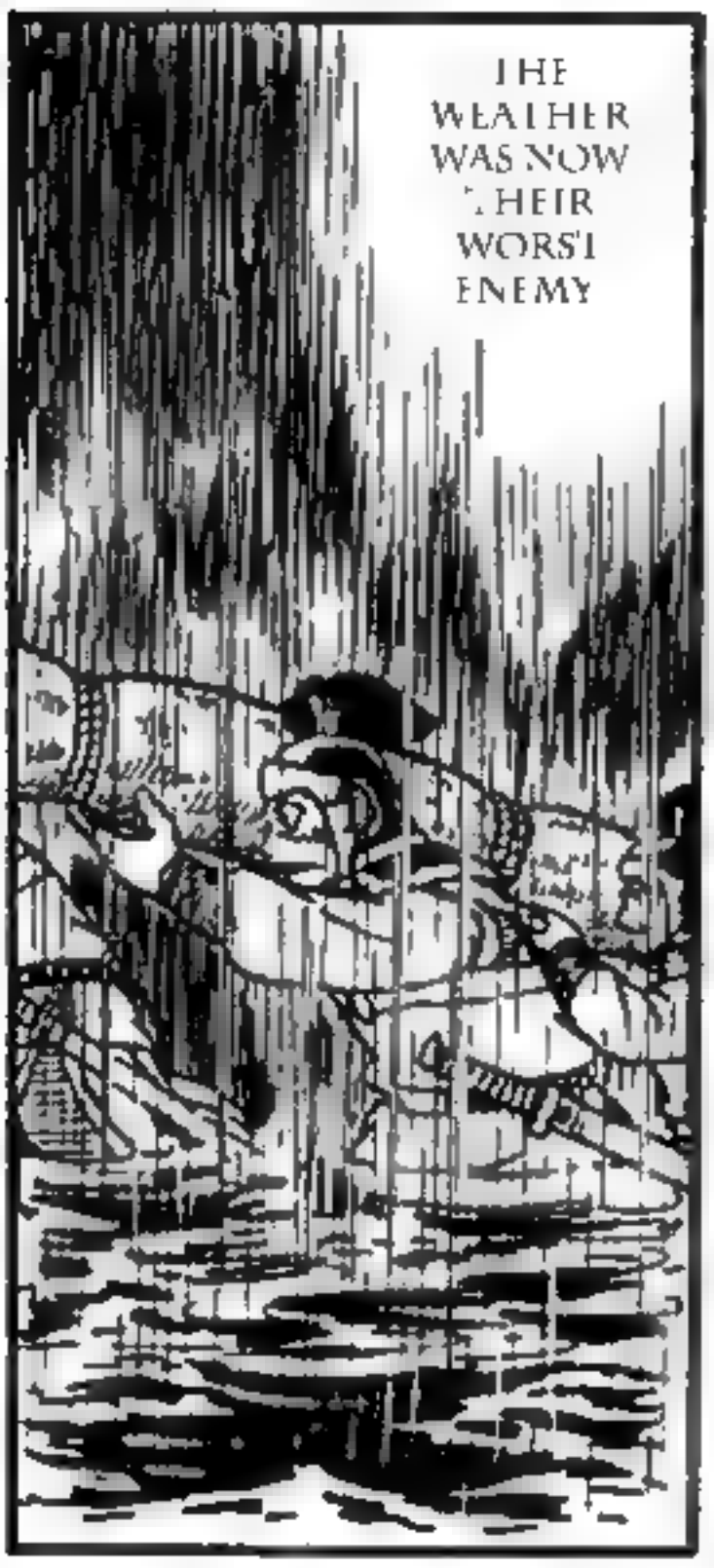

THE SEVERAL MONTHS AFTER,
WERE MARKED BY MINOR SKIRMISHES.
IN WHICH CAO CAO'S ARMIES MADE NO HEADWAY
YES, WE'RE MERELY LOSING MORE AND MORE MEN OUT HERE FOR NOTHING.
VERY STRANGE... THE CHANCELLOR ISN'T SHOWING ANY OF HIS USUAL SELF IN THIS CAMPAIGN AT ALL.

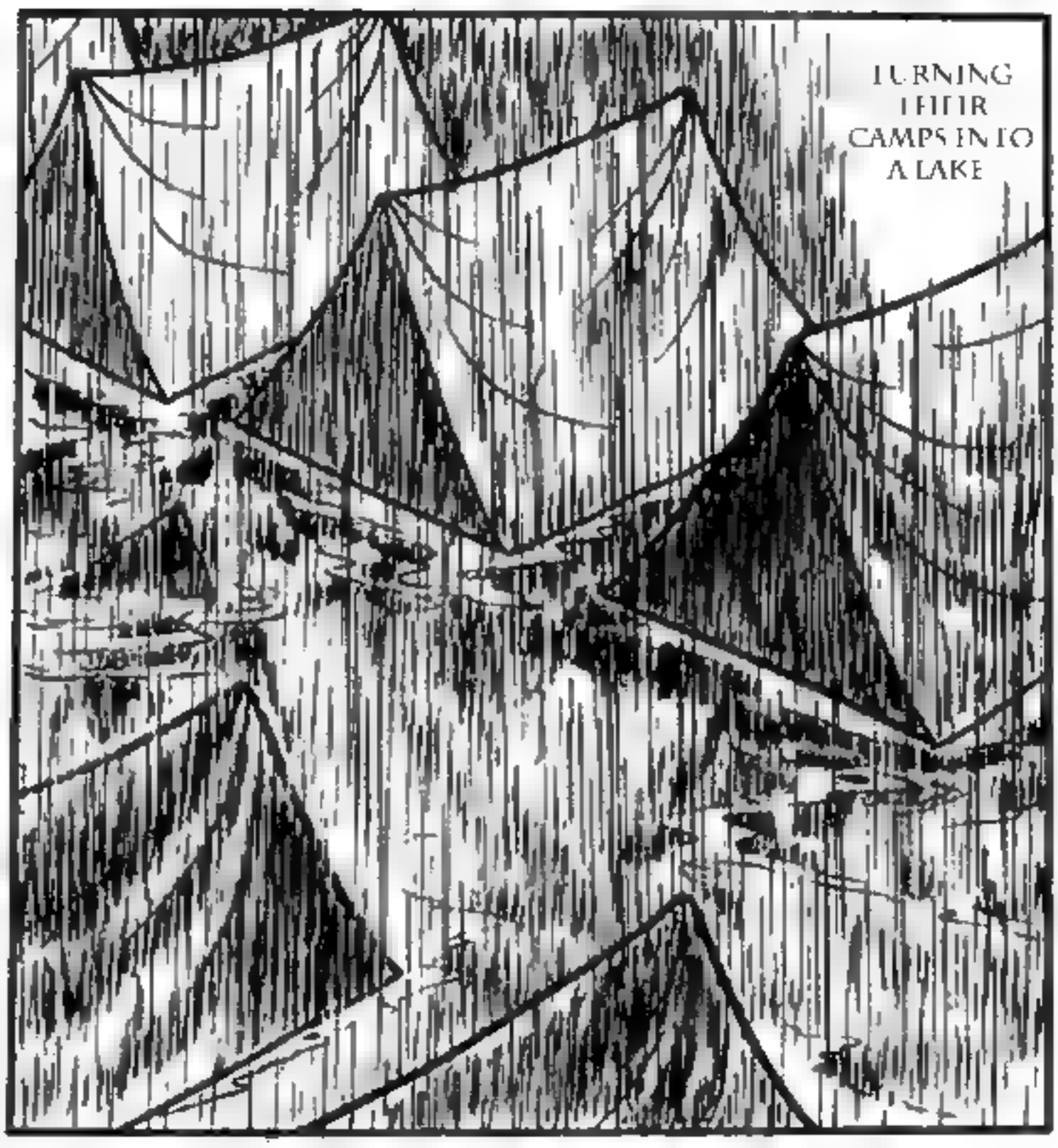

YET
WITHOUT
ANY
CHANGE
IN THEIR
SITUATION


THE NEW
YEAR
STARTED.


BY FEBRUARY,
THE RAIN
BEGAN TO
POUR HEAVILY
EVERY DAY


THE RIVER FLOODED,


THE WEATHER WAS NOW THEIR WORST ENEMY


TURNING THEIR CAMPS INTO A LAKE

AND AT THIS DIRE TIME THEIR FOOD SUPPLIES RAN OUT

NONE HAD THE WILL OR STRENGTH TO FIGHT

SOLDIERS RESORTED TO EATING HORSES THAT HAD DIED FROM STARVATION OR SICKNESS

COULD THAT DREAM...

HMM...

POSSIBLY MEANT THAT SUN QUAN WOULD RISE TO BECOME THE NEW EMPEROR...?

I BRING YOU A LETTER FROM SUN QUAN...

CHAN-CELLOR,

?

IT WOULD BE IN YOUR BEST INTERESTS TO RETREAT NOW, LEST YOU WISH TO REPEAT YOUR MISFORTUNE AT RED CLIFFS. I PROMISE NOT TO PURSE YOUR TROOPS IF YOU WITHDRAW NOW.

YOU AND I ARE ALL SERVANTS OF HAN. HOWEVER, YOU CARELESSLY WAGE WAR HERE AND THERE, CAUSING MUCH SUFFERING FOR THE PEOPLE. HOW CAN ANY MAN CALL YOUR ACTIONS VIRTUOUS?

AND NOW, EVEN THE HEAVENS WISH FOR YOU WITHDRAWAL THROUGH CEASELESS RAINFALL.

IT SEEMS THE RAIN HAS CAUSED THEM THE SAME PROBLEMS AS US.

I SEE.

YES, SIR.

MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR A QUICK RETREAT BACK TO XUCHANG.

AND SO, THE WEI FORCES RETURNED WITHOUT HAVING ACCOMPLISHED ANYTHING

IT'S TIME FOR US TO WITHDRAW TO JIANYE AS WELL.

THEY'RE FINALLY WITHDRAWING.

THE WU ARMY IN TURN WITHDREW TO JIANYE

OUR ARMY CAN NOW EVEN STAND ALONE AGAINST CAO CAO'S! WHAT DO YOU MEN THINK OF CONQUERING JINGZHOU AT LAST?

THUS, A QUICK CONQUEST IS KEY, AND I BELIEVE I HAVE JUST THE PLAN FOR THAT.

IF CAO CAO WERE TO CHANGE HIS MIND AND COME BACK, IT WOULD BE DISASTROUS IF OUR ARMIES ARE STILL IN JINGZHOU.

MY LORD WILL SEND TWO LETTERS.

IT IS QUITE SIMPLE.

A PLAN? DO TELL, ZHANG ZHAO.

THE SECOND WILL BE SENT TO ZHANG LU OF HANZHONG.

AND THE SECOND LETTER?

ONE WILL BE SENT TO LIU ZHANG OF SHU, INFORMING HIM OF RUMOURS THAT WU AND SHU HAVE MADE AN ALLIANCE TO SPLIT SHU BETWEEN THEMSELVES. THIS WILL SEED DISTRUST BETWEEN LIU BEI AND LIU ZHANG.

FACING ATTACKS IN BOTH SHU AND JINGZHOU, LIU BEI WILL FIND HIMSELF UNABLE TO DECIDE WHICH FRONT TO FOCUS ON.

YOU WILL ADVISE HIM TO ATTACK JINGZHOU.

HMM, I LIKE IT. LET'S CARRY IT OUT AT ONCE.

WE WILL THEN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS CONFUSION TO QUICKLY CONQUER JINGZHOU.

THREE OPTIONS

WORRY NOT, MY LORD. RUXU IS TOO FAR FROM HERE TO AFFECT OUR THEATER HERE IN SHU.
I'VE RECEIVED A REPORT THAT CAO CAO IS ATTACKING WU ALONG THE RUXU RIVER.

WITH KONGMING IN JINGZHOU, WE NEED NEITHER WORRY ABOUT WEI NOR WU.

WHAT? BUT IF CAO CAO WERE TO MAKE HEADWAY INTO WU, IT'S ONLY OBVIOUS HE'LL THEN COME AFTER JINGZHOU.

LIU ZHANG MEANS WELL BUT HIS INCOMPETENCE ALSO MAKES HIM SUSCEPTIBLE TO WHATEVER SCHEME HIS RETAINERS ARE PLOTTING.

TEST HIS HEART?

HOWEVER, THIS DEVELOPMENT WILL BE AN IDEAL CHANCE TO TEST LIU ZHANG'S HEART.

NOT AT ALL, CONSIDERING WE'RE USING OUR OWN MEN TO PROTECT THEIR ENTIRE STATE RIGHT NOW.

ISN'T THAT ASKING A LITTLE TOO MUCH?

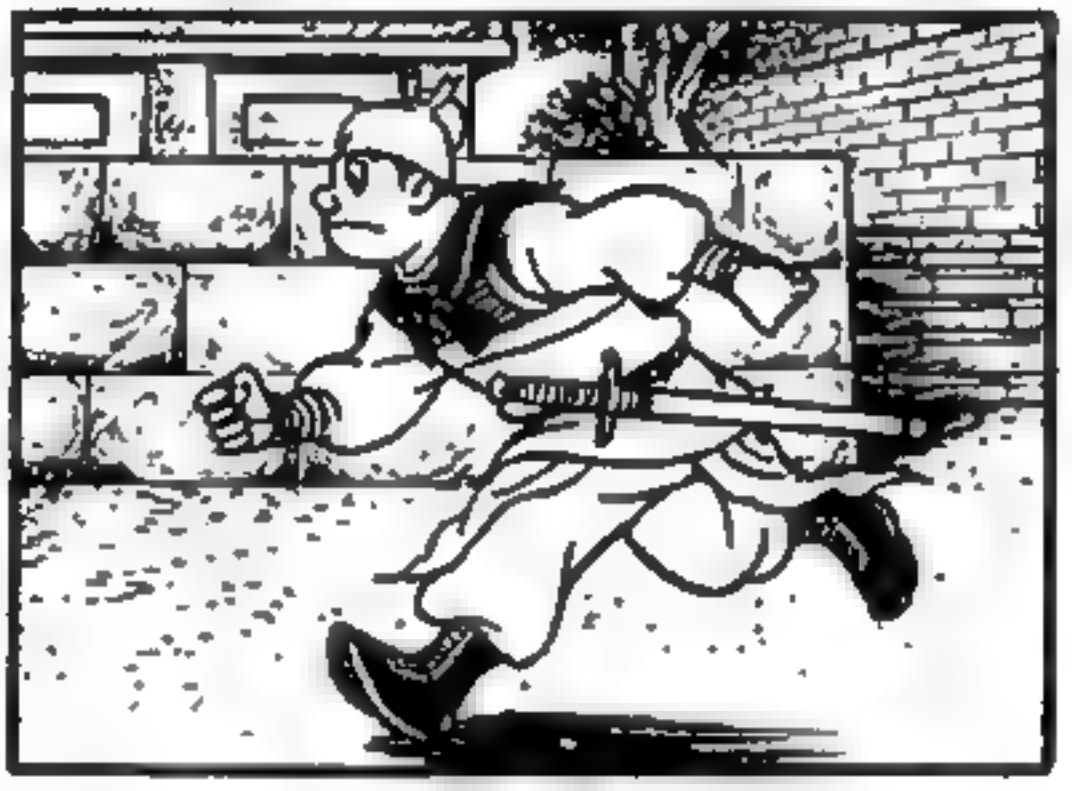
PLEASE SEND HIM A LETTER SAYING THAT WU HAS ASKED US FOR REINFORCEMENTS TO FEND OFF CAO CAO'S INVASION ONCE MORE. HOWEVER, WITH OUR TROOPS CURRENTLY TIED UP HERE IN SHU, WE WOULD LIKE TO ASK SHU TO HELP FUND THE WAR EFFORT BY SENDING 30 OR 40,000 SOLDIERS AND 100,000 BUSHELS OF GRAIN.

HMM...

FU
RIVER
PASS

GOT IT.
IT LOOKS LIKE ONE OF LIU BEI'S MEN. GO ASK THE GENERALS IF WE SHOULD LET HIM PASS.

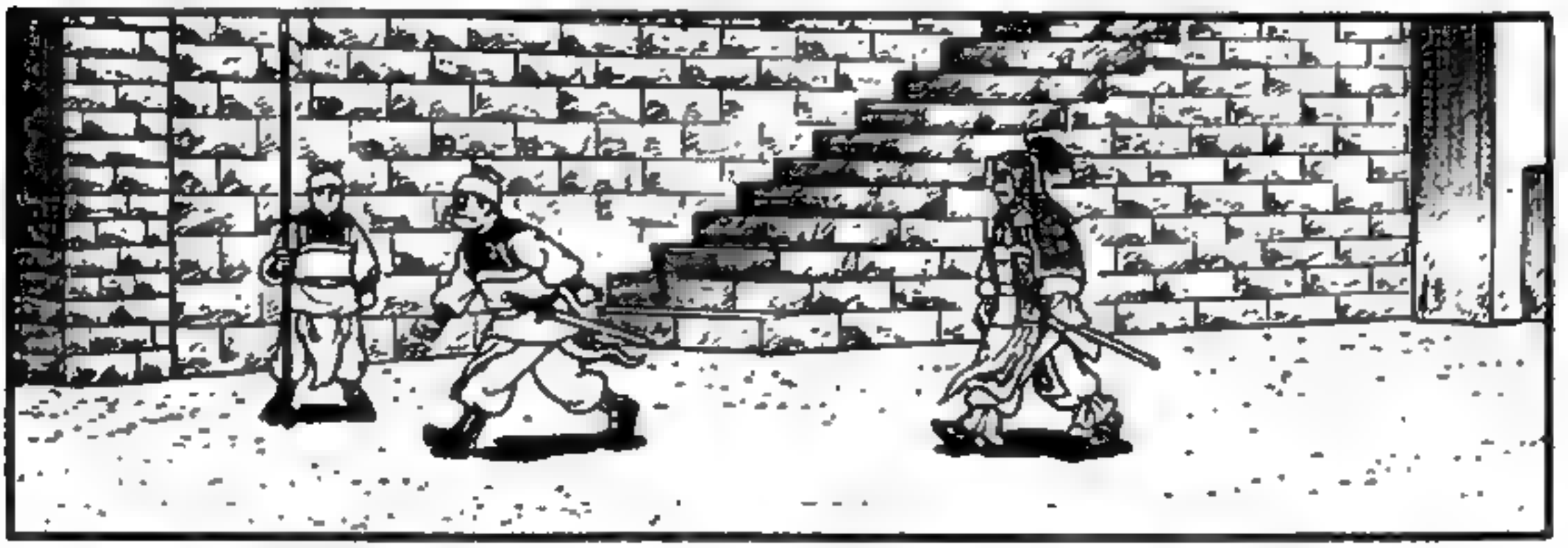
GENERAL YANG HUAI!

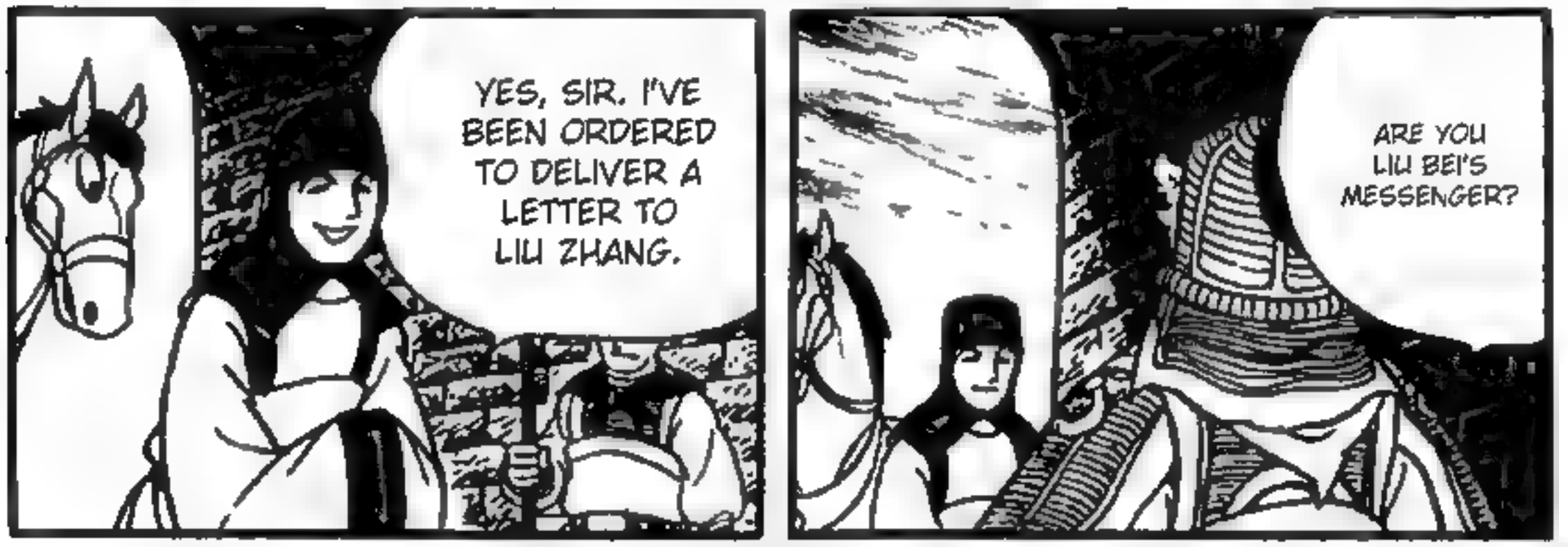


THAT SCOUN-DREL LIU BEI'S THE BANE OF SHU!

LIU BEI'S MESSENGER?
ONE OF LIU BEI'S MESSENGERS IS APPROACHING. SHOULD I LET HIM PASS?

WE CAN'T JUST LET HIS MEN PASS AT WILL.




YES, SIR. I'VE BEEN ORDERED TO DELIVER A LETTER TO LIU ZHANG.
ARE YOU LIU BEI'S MESSENGER?

I'M AFRAID I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING OTHER THAN THIS LETTER.

I'M AFRAID I MUST ASK YOU FOR PROOF THAT YOU'RE LIU BEI'S MESSENGER, CONSIDERING WE'RE CURRENTLY AT WAR.

THAT MIGHT DO. HERE, LET ME HAVE A LOOK.

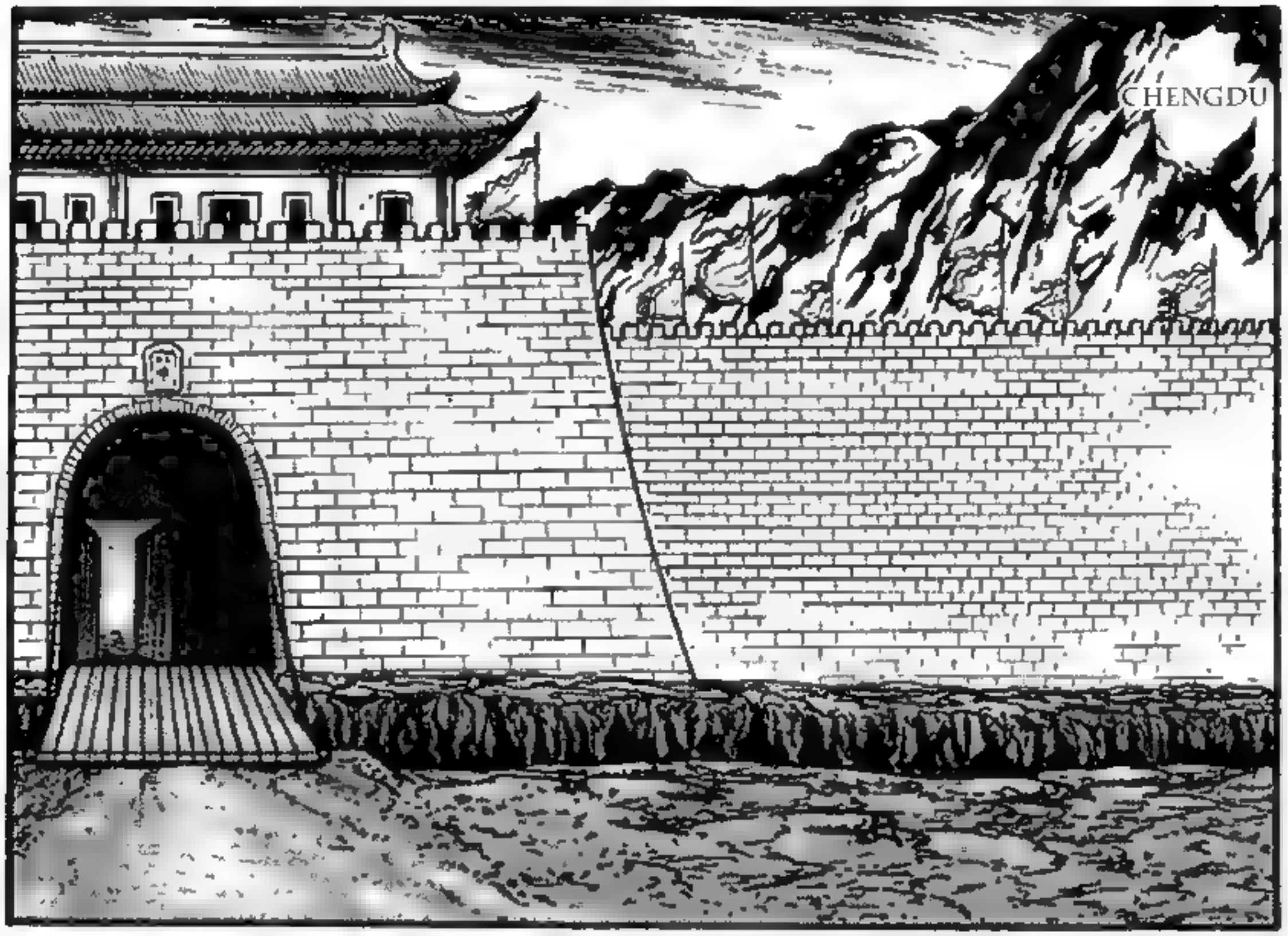
THESE DEMANDS ARE OUTRAGEOUS!

HMM.

HERE, SIR...

ALLOW ME TO ESCORT YOU TO CHENGDU THEN.

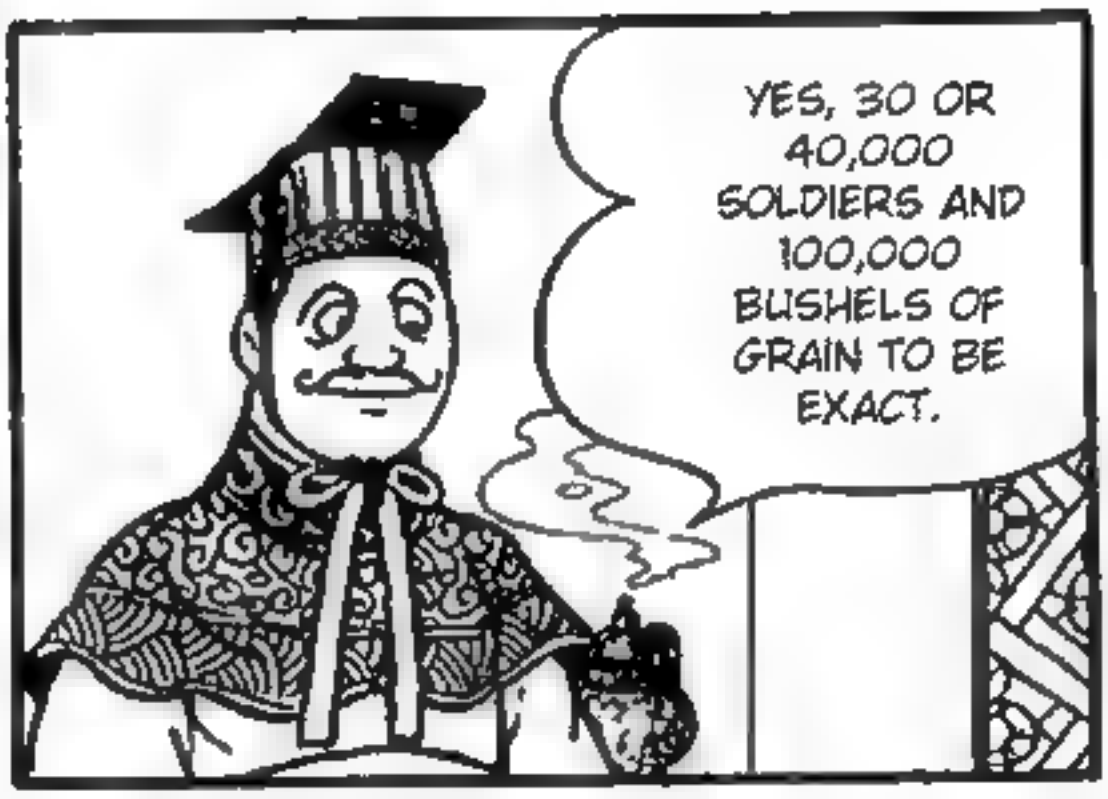
AH, YES. THIS IS LIU BEI'S LETTER FOR SURE!

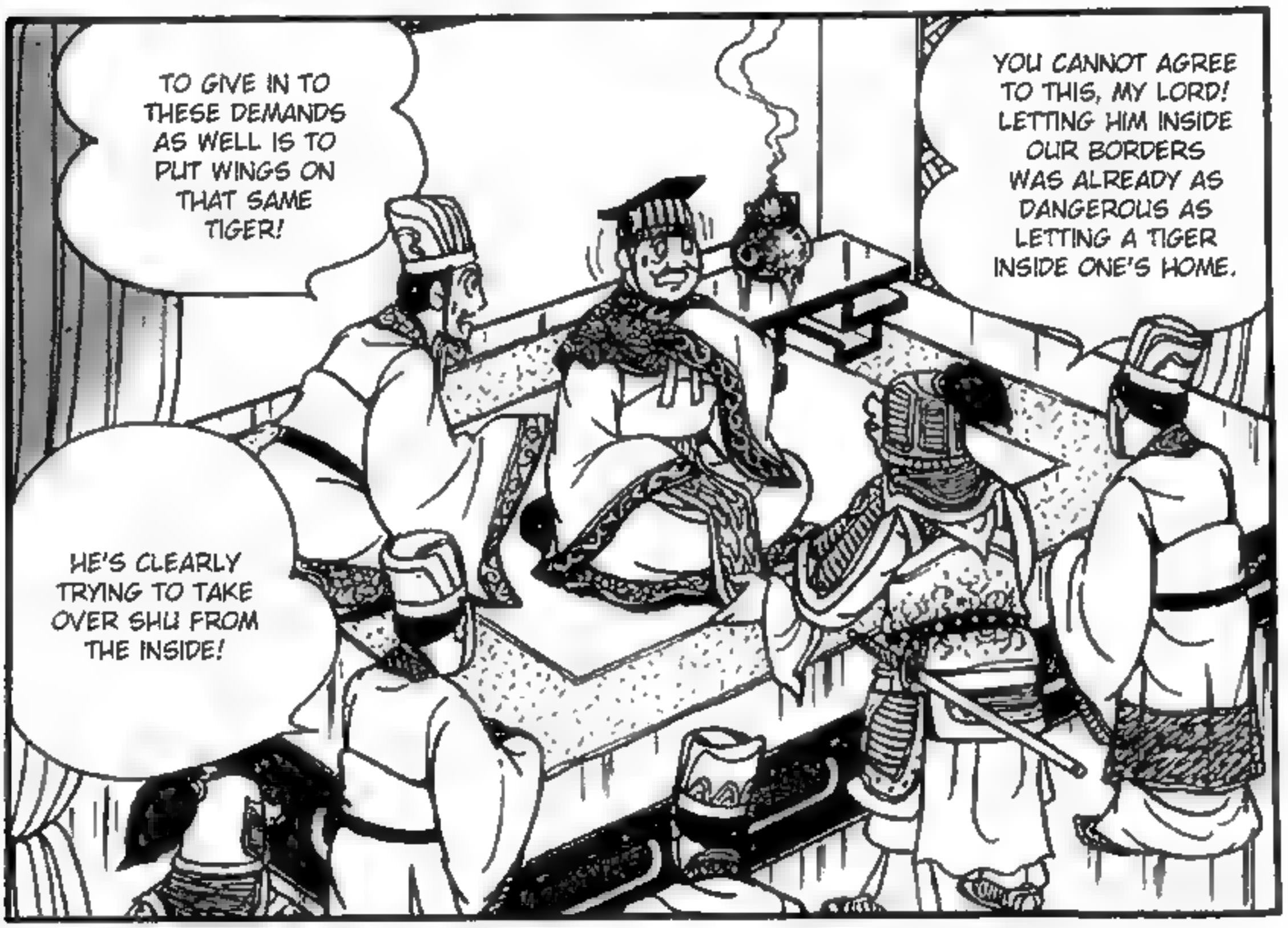

CHENGDU

A LETTER FROM LIU BEI?

IT SEEMS LIU BEI IS ASKING FOR SOLDIERS AND SUPPLIES.

WHAT!?


YES, 30 OR 40,000 SOLDIERS AND 100,000 BUSHELS OF GRAIN TO BE EXACT.


TO GIVE IN TO THESE DEMANDS AS WELL IS TO PUT WINGS ON THAT SAME TIGER!
YOU CANNOT AGREE TO THIS, MY LORD! LETTING HIM INSIDE OUR BORDERS WAS ALREADY AS DANGEROUS AS LETTING A TIGER INSIDE ONE'S HOME.
HE'S CLEARLY TRYING TO TAKE OVER SHU FROM THE INSIDE!

THIS IS NO TIME TO BE SOFT-HEARTED, MY LORD! THE FATE OF SHU HANGS IN BALANCE!

B-BUT HE AND I ARE RELA-TIVES AND HE'S PROTECTING US EVEN AS WE SPEAK!

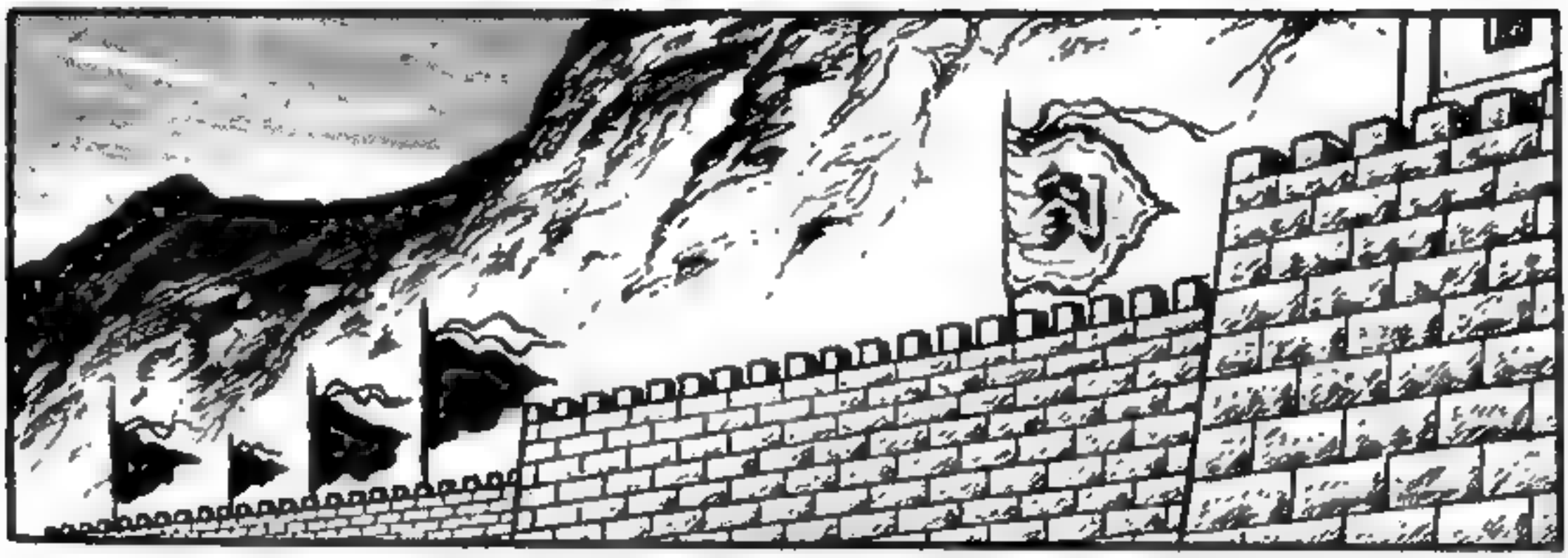
T-THEN YOU WANT ME TO TURN THE OTHER WAY AFTER ALL HE'S DONE FOR US...!?

AS YOU CAN SEE, YOUR RETAINERS ARE ALL IN AGREEMENT THAT YOU REJECT HIS DEMANDS.

I SUGGEST YOU SEND HIM 4000 OLD SOLDIERS AND 10,000 BUSHELS OF GRAIN.

WELL, WE CAN'T ENTIRELY IGNORE HIM, CONSIDERING HE'S FENDING OFF ZHANG LU AT JIAMENG PASS.

AND SO, ONLY 10,000 BUSHELS OF GRAIN AND A MERE 4000 ILL-TRAINED AND OLD SOLDIERS WERE SENT TO LIU BEI



THIS IS HIS REPLY!?

EVEN THOUGH I'VE COME ALL THE WAY HERE FROM JINGZHOU TO HELP PROTECT HIS LANDS, THAT GREEDY LOUT DARES NOT TO RECIPROCATE THE FAVOUR!?

SO THIS IS WHAT LIU ZHANG THINKS OF ME!

GO BACK AND TELL LIU ZHANG HOW HE EXPECTS MY MEN TO RISK THEIR LIVES IF THIS IS WHAT SHU THINKS OF THEM!

WHAT SHOULD WE DO NOW?

IT'S NO WONDER ZHANG SONG, MENG DA, AND FA ZHENG ALL WISH TO ABANDON LIU ZHANG AND SERVE MY LORD INSTEAD.

YOU SEE, MY LORD? EVEN THOUGH YOU'VE TRIED TO TAKE THE LONG WAY AROUND AND HELP LIU ZHANG, HE'LL NEVER BE INTERESTED IN ANYTHING MORE THAN HIS OWN INTERESTS.

WE SHOULD DO WHAT WE CAME HERE TO DO. THAT IS, TO CONQUER SHU.

THE FIRST IS TO MAKE A QUICK, ALL-OUT ASSAULT ON CHENGDU AND CAPTURE LIU ZHANG.

3?

I HAVE 3 PLANS FOR THAT.

THE SECOND PLAN IS TO CAPTURE FU RIVER PASS. YANG HUAI AND GAO PEI WHO GUARD THE PASS WISH NOTHING MORE THAN FOR YOUR RETURN TO JINGZHOU. IF WE LIE TO THEM ABOUT WITHDRAWING BACK TO JINGZHOU, THEY'LL SURELY COME OUT TO SAY FAREWELL. THAT WILL BE OUR CHANCE TO STRIKE.

THE FIRST OPTION IS TOO RISKY, AND THE THIRD OPTION WILL GET US NOWHERE.

THE THIRD OPTION IS TO ACTUALLY WITHDRAW TO SHU AND STRENGTHEN OUR DEFENSES. QUITE UNPREFERABLE AND ONLY TO BE USED IN THE WORST-CASE SCENARIO.

YES, LET'S GET STARTED AT ONCE.

AS YOU WISH.

HMM...

THEN SHALL WE GO WITH THE SECOND OPTION?

WHAT!? LIU BEI WILL WITHDRAW TO JINGZHOU!?

HOW!?

NO, THIS IS ACTUALLY QUITE FORTUNATE FOR US.

S-SEE, I TOLD YOU! WE'VE NEEDLESSLY ANGERED LIU BEI!

EXACTLY. LIU BEI IS CUR-RENTLY SHU'S BIGGEST THREAT.

ZHANG LU IS BUT A MERE CUB COMPARED TO LIU BEI.

NO! IF LIU BEI RETURNS NOW, ALL MY EFFORTS WILL HAVE BEEN FOR NAUGHT!

I MUST WRITE HIM A LETTER AT ONCE HOW MANY HERE AT CHENGDU ARE DYING TO SERVE HIM.

WELCOME HOME, MASTER.

ZHANG SONG, ARE YOU THERE?

OH, I WAS IN THE AREA AND I THOUGHT I SHOULD DROP BY AND SEE HOW YOU WERE DOING.

HELLO, BROTHER. WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE FROM GUANGHAN?

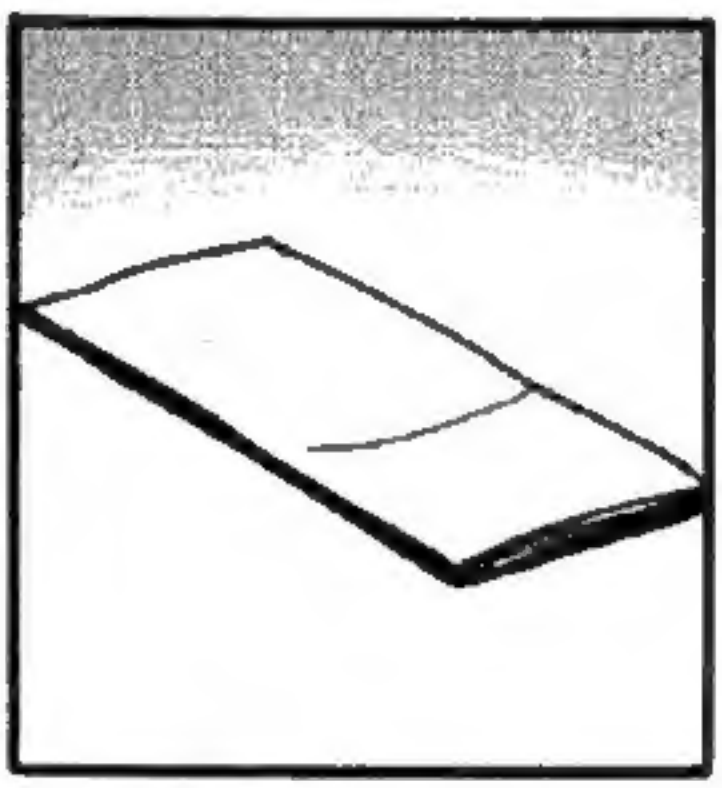
AFTER SHARING MANY STORIES,

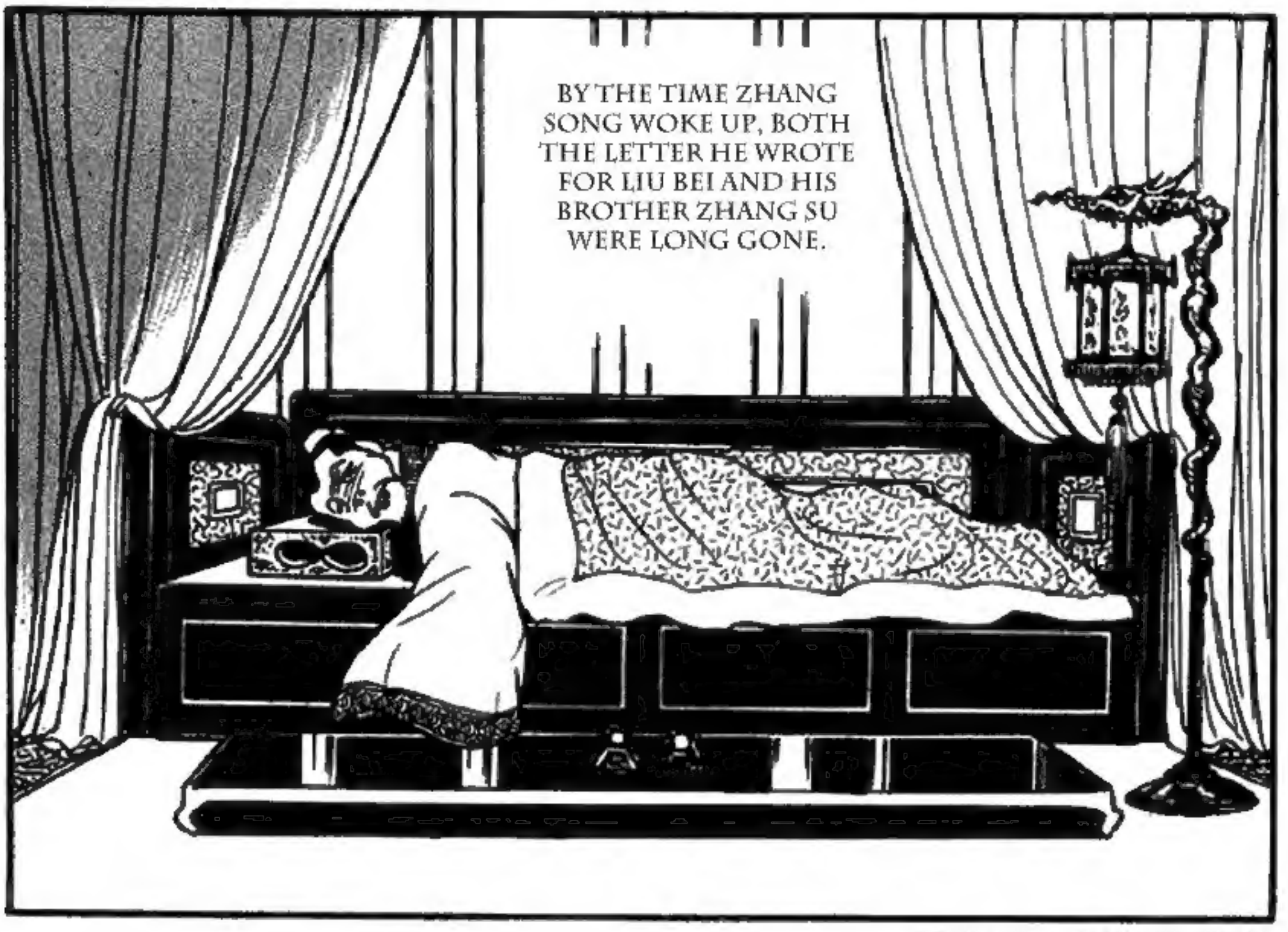
AMD DRINKING ONE TOO MANY GLASSES,

ZHANG SU WAS THE GOVERNOR OF GUANGHAN.

HAHA. YOU WERE NEVER ONE TO HANDLE YOUR DRINK SO WELL.

ZHANG SONG DOZED OFF IN A DRUNKEN STUPOR.





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33

横山 光輝

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